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# Academic staff mobility and migration: Ex-USSR academic migrants in South Australian higher education

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*To my family*

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## ABSTRACT

An integral aspect of the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education has been a significant increase in academic mobility. While much of the research into academic mobility focuses on student behaviors and experiences, the mobility of academic staff of universities has not yet been systematically researched. This case study, then, explores academic mobility and migration issues for academic staff in Australia. The primary objective is the investigation of the experiences of academic migrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union, who moved to Australia during the period 1990–2015. The case study employs a social transformation perspective, which focuses on the broad global processes of social and economic changes instigated by migration, and for its primary data draws on interviews with twenty-four academics, conducted in a combination of English and Russian. Scholarly literature, Australian migration legislation and associated program documentation and Australian Bureau of Statistics material have also been sourced to provide the context of the study. Content analysis of the interview data has revealed two broad topics - non-academic migration experiences and academic work experiences - and six main themes: migration motivations, settlement experiences, academic career, and teaching, supervision, and research experiences.

The research demonstrates that all of the expected “push” and “pull” factors of migration have been at play. However, the findings indicate that, for study participants, economic factors rank as secondary to the professional and social migration motivations; this supports the social transformation approach that migration is driven not only by economic, but also—importantly—by socio-cultural and political



factors. This study also shows younger academic migrants seeing themselves as global academics rather than identifying closely with any national group; this trend is consistent with the ideas of transnational academia and global brain circulation.

Within the multicultural, global academy, it can be easy to assume that practices are the same in universities everywhere; however, this study reveals that local university cultures can be markedly different from each other. The results reveal that participants' specific education and work experiences during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods have influenced the ways these academics perform in Australian higher education. To their credit, most participants from the ex-USSR report effectively negotiating their new and old academic experiences and successfully integrating into the Australian education system. Nevertheless, the study data indicate that the multicultural academy does not provide for these staff as effectively as it might; better university induction programs would allow for smoother settlement and acculturation into the new workplace. Furthermore, the study results demonstrate that, despite the official rhetoric lauding multiculturalism in the workplace, in practice universities do little to recognise the value of the diversity of international academics. The benefits from the multicultural diversity of international staff are thus not maximised. This case study points to the tensions associated with the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education and the lived experience within the multicultural academy.

## DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Study context**

Globalisation, the “set of economic, social, technological, political and cultural structures and processes arising from the changing character of the production, consumption and trade of goods and assets that comprise the base of the international political economy”, has been much discussed over the last two decades (UNESCO, 2001). Globalisation has influenced all areas of human activity, including higher education, by facilitating the crossing of national boundaries and the extensive use of digital communication technologies (Altbach, 2015; O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2002; Tapscott, 1996). Globalisation has set off a steady increase of flows of capital and money, goods and services, ideas and information, tourists and immigrants all over the world. Higher education has been directly affected by these flows that are inextricably woven into today's broad economic, technological, scientific, political and cultural trends (Altbach, 2004). Internationalisation, brain circulation and academic mobility are characteristic signs of globalisation in the university sector (Altbach, 2004; Kim, 2010; Scott, 2011, 2015; Yang & Welch, 2010).

In the new globalised environment, knowledge is regarded the key resource for economic development both within nations and worldwide (Drucker, 2012). Indeed, the degree of incorporation of knowledge and information into the economy is so great that it is regarded as the basis of competitive economic advance (Houghton, J. and Sheehan, P., 2000). The central role of universities in creating and distributing knowledge means that higher education has now gained unprecedented importance (Altbach, 2004).

To cope with globalisation and to use its benefits, academic institutions have developed specific policies and programs, often referred to as internationalisation of higher education (Knight 1997, de Witt, 2002). More detailed discussion of the terms “globalisation” and “internationalisation” will appear in the Section 2.2. The globalisation and internationalisation of higher education have given rise to many challenges that today’s universities cannot ignore, for instance, the global demand for higher education, the use of English as the preferred language for scientific publications, and society’s need for highly educated personnel (Altbach, 2004). On the other hand, globalisation has made it much easier to work and study outside one’s home country and thus has facilitated academic mobility.

Academic mobility has been one of the critical aspects of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. Academic mobility refers to a period of study, teaching and/or research in a country other than a student's or academic staff member's home country (UNESCO, 2003). More and more academics travel the world for various reasons (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Beerkens, 2003; Byram & Dervin, 2009; Pietsch, 2010; Tremblay, 2005), and those who move for work and/or study at universities are of particular interest to this research.

Thousands of academics from overseas have migrated to Australian universities, including universities of South Australia (where this study was conducted) in the last two decades (Hugo, 2006, 2008; Hugo & Harris, 2011; Kuptsch, Pang, & Hugo, 2006). These staff members play a crucial role in the broad goals of South Australian universities to achieve “excellence in education, research and engagement with the community” (University of Adelaide, 2018) by “supporting the world’s best educated and most innovative, cohesive and sustainable society” (University of South Australia,

2018) that is able to “change lives and change the world” (Flinders University, 2018). In order to achieve these goals, every South Australian university states that they employ “world-class” academics, who can not only educate students to the highest standards, but also demonstrate leadership in research and innovation, and create, disseminate and preserve knowledge. Included among these world-class academics are many migrant academics recruited from around the globe (Hugo, 2006, 2008; Hugo & Harris, 2011; Kuptsch et al., 2006). This study explores the experiences of academic mobility from the perspective of migrant academic staff in South Australian universities. In particular, in the focus of this research is a case study of the academic migrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union who migrated to live and work in Australia during 1990 –2015.

## **1.2. Study significance**

Academic staff mobility and their migration experiences have received only limited attention in the Australian context. As Hugo points out: “Immigrant settlement remains a neglected dimension of Australian (and global) migration and settlement policy and research” (Hugo, 2011). This study addresses this gap through a case study that explores the effects of academic mobility on the individual migrant.

Academics from the ex-USSR constitute an identifiable group of professionally skilled migrants that have significant intellectual potential. In Australia ex-USSR immigrants stand out from other migrant populations and the native-born population as having higher levels of education on average. While experiences of academic migration of many nationalities have been explored (Da Wan & Sirat, 2018; Green & Myatt, 2011; Hsieh, 2012; Huang, 2018; Hugo, 2010; Hugo & Bakalis, 2009; Kinchin, Hosein, Rao, & Mace, 2018; Lee & Kuzhabekova, 2018; Lee, 2014; Maadad & Tight, 2014; Saltmarsh &

Swirski, 2010; Song & McCarthy, 2018; Yang & Welch, 2010), academics from the ex-USSR have been afforded little attention from researchers. As a researcher, my own past and current personal experiences as an academic and student at the tertiary level motivates this research project. I wished to better understand why academics leave their home country and how academic migrants from the ex-USSR fit into the Australian academy, and, in particular, whether professional practices and social-cultural aspects of working in South Australian higher education are similar or different to those they were used to in the ex-USSR. By focusing on participants' migration and academic work experiences, this study can contribute to the understanding of the personal and work-related challenges of migration in general and to the scholarly field of academic mobility studies in particular.

This study uses the social transformation approach to migration studies because it encourages researchers to examine "not only the perspectives of governments and international agencies, but also the experience of migrants, communities and civil society organizations" (Castles & Wise, 2008:4); this approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of academics' migration to Australia, leading to a better, more nuanced understanding of the benefits and challenges of globalization in higher education.

The findings of this case study are relevant to international academics who are considering migrating to Australia for work. More importantly, the study will provide information for Australian immigration policy-makers and higher institution managers. The findings will also help to inform higher education institutions' policies on recruitment and retention of international academics and researchers, and better understanding of cultural diversity in the workplace.



### **1.3. Research questions**

The current research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the migration experiences of the ex-USSR academics working in South Australian higher education?
2. What are the professional challenges and benefits of academic mobility for individual academics?

To answer these questions, 24 academics from the ex-USSR currently living and working in South Australia were interviewed. The collected data allowed exploration of the complex links between migration, higher education and academic staff life in real-life situations. This qualitative study also provides insights into contexts influencing migration decisions and the lived experiences of the case study participants.

### **1.4. Thesis outline**

Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of existing literature on the experiences of international academics in higher education; this leads to defining the research gap. Theories of migration and settlement are discussed, and the study's theoretical framework is defined.

Chapter 3 presents the broad picture of Australian migration history, skilled migration programs and stages of multiculturalism in Australia that are relevant to this study's focus on skilled migrants from ex-USSR countries. It also provides a summary of the historical and current migration from the ex-USSR countries to Australia and describes the population group under study.

Chapter 4 explains how the case study approach and its strengths and limitations fit the exploration of the lived experiences of individuals. Recruitment of study

participants is described and data collection methods discussed. Ethical issues are addressed, including participants' voluntary participation and measures to keep their confidentiality and anonymity. The limitations of the method including the generalisability of the findings concerns are also addressed.

The data analysis chapters are organised into two broad parts. Part I responds to the first research question and focuses on the non-academic experiences of academic migration (Chapters 5 and 6). Part II answers the second research question and is dedicated to the analysis of the professional issues of academic mobility in the host country; it consists of four data analysis chapters (Chapters 7-10).

Part I, Chapter 5 explores motivations of the ex-USSR academics to migrate to Australia. Following the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, social, economic, political, and professional reasons to migrate are identified. The findings confirm that push and pull migration theory is in play. Migration "push" factors for the ex-USSR academic migrants are mostly professional, social, economic and political; migration "pull" factors are mostly of a social and environmental nature. Chapter 6 then reveals the challenges of settlement in Australia for international academics and strategies of adaptation that these post-Soviet academics applied to overcome those challenges. The findings demonstrate that settlement is a complex and multidimensional process that leads to individual changes, having an impact not only on migrants, but also on the host society.

Part II begins with a broad overview of the academic careers of participants in Australia in Chapter 7. This chapter explores experiences and real-life challenges of the ex-USSR academic migrants in fitting into the new university work environment and discusses academics' expectations and perceptions of the Australian higher education

system. Understanding of the Australian university culture is critical to the academics' successful adaptation to the new workplace. The findings demonstrate that this adaptation is not strongly dependent on academic discipline; rather, it is linked to the academic's professional and individual experiences prior to migration to Australia. These challenges are not unique to the ex-USSR academics and can be experienced by other international academics.

Chapter 8 then explores several aspects of teaching practices at the Australian universities through the eyes of the participants and demonstrates how academics from the ex-USSR negotiate old and new experiences at their work at an Australian university. The chapter reveals how participants are navigating working in the different education system and also introduces the ways academics can usefully apply some of their past practices in the new university environment.

The focus of Chapter 9 is on supervision experiences of the ex-USSR academics as doctoral students and acting as supervisors. It demonstrates that supervisory experiences of the participants vary enormously depending on where they spent their formative academic years. The findings reveal that there is a need for training and support of international academics not only in developing their multicultural competencies, but also to better understand the preferred supervisory pedagogies in Australia, and a subsequent need to adjust some of their academic practices, supervision strategies and tactics.

Chapter 10 is dedicated to the ex-USSR academics' research experiences, focusing on the participants' perception of academic freedom, experiences of building academic networks in Australia and maintaining existing collaborations with their former colleagues. Data confirmed that brain circulation between sending and receiving

countries exists; however, in the case of the ex-USSR and Australian academies, it is not very dynamic. The chapter highlights the importance of supporting academic networks and international research collaboration to sustain the processes of global brain circulation and knowledge transfer.

To conclude, Chapter 11 discusses the overall findings of this study, demonstrates implications and provides several recommendations. It is likely Australian colleagues can learn from the post-Soviet bloc academics' experiences of cross-cultural adaptation and apply some of the ex-USSR academics' teaching, supervision, research and collaboration approaches in practice. The results can serve as empirical evidence of the ways international academics more generally are supported in Australian universities.

## **Chapter 2. Literature review and theoretical perspectives**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter I outline the theories which are important in explaining the complex nature of academic migration. In particular, to answer the research questions of the study, I draw upon theories relating to migration and settlement. I start this chapter by exploring of the concepts of academic mobility in the light of globalisation and internationalisation. Because the participants of this study are academic migrants and the focus of the study is to a large extent on their migration and settlement experiences in Australia, Section 2.4. of this chapter is dedicated to the migration theories I will employ in interpreting the empirical data for this study. Section 2.5. follows with the theories of settlement that will be used to explain the challenges academic migrants experience when they move countries to work at an Australian higher education institution.

Globalisation has influenced all areas of human activity, including higher education, by introducing easier ways to cross national boundaries and the extensive use of digital communication technologies (Altbach, 2002; O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2002; Tapscott, 1996). For instance, globalisation has brought targeted industrial investments and economic restructuring, resulting in situations when particular occupations or skills become obsolete, and others are in strong demand (Blossfeld, Buchholz, & Hofäcker, 2006; A. Green, 1999). In addition, an aging population, decline in fertility in many countries and changes in work locations provide opportunities for international migration and create powerful motivations for those seeking better livelihoods elsewhere (Beck, 2018; Castles, 2007b, 2013; Erel, 2010). Globalisation has set off a steady increase of flows of capital and money, goods and services, ideas and

information, tourists and immigrants all over the world. More and more academics travel the world for various reasons (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Beerkens, 2003; Byram & Dervin, 2009; Pietsch, 2010; Tremblay, 2005), and those who move for work and/or study at universities are of particular interest here. To understand why academics do move I have drawn upon a number of migration theories. Using the lenses of settlement theories further assists in understanding the challenges that academic migrants might face in the process of their settlement in the new country. In this study globalisation is seen as a set of processes that provide for growing interaction and interdependence between economies and societies, and across nations and territories (Dreher, Gaston, & Martens, 2008; Vujakovic, 2009). When talking about globalisation, four global-scale trends are typically discussed: de-territorialisation of the countries (Beerkens, 2003; K. Cox, 1997; Swyngedouw, 2004); economic interdependency of nations (Mansfield & Pollins, 2009; Stiglitz, 2002); homogenisation with the aim to blend national cultures (Beerkens, 2003; Hannerz, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999); and cosmopolitanism providing global citizenship (Beck, 2018; Beerkens, 2003; Gunesch, 2004; Haigh, 2008; Pieterse, 2015; R. Robertson, 1994; Tomlinson, 2003).

By contrast, internationalisation is considered to be a response of the higher education institutions to globalisation, as it addresses the increase of initiatives for nations' coexistence, which often goes above individual national cultural differences and traditions (Altbach & de Wit, 2015; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Blight, Davis, & Olsen, 1999; Cantwell, 2009; E. Jones, Coelen, Beelen, & De Wit, 2015; Jones & de Wit, 2012; Teichler, 2004). While internationalisation is more often about integration and mutual influence of national cultures on the national level, globalisation, in contrast, is more about decreasing the role of individual countries and nations in favour of more

universal models. Nevertheless, a number of scholars do consider globalisation and internationalisation to be closely interconnected (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015). Indeed, in the global environment almost every company or enterprise is affected by at least some kind of international challenge (Kalinic, Forza, 2012) and universities are not an exception. Internationalisation of higher education, is defined as the strategic and competitive endeavour of the universities to integrate international, intercultural or global dimensions onto the purpose, functions and delivery of education (Knight, 2004, 2008, 2015). This study will explore some of the impacts of internationalisation on higher education at the institutional and individual levels.

One result of the internationalisation of higher education is “academic mobility”, the international flows of people for the purposes of work and study at universities (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Byram & Dervin, 2009), which is the focus of this thesis. Academic mobility has a profound influence on the lives and careers of people as they move between countries to work and study in higher education. In this chapter migration and settlement theories are drawn upon to unpack the ideas of academic mobility and to demonstrate that migration is one part of the broader processes of social and economic changes that are happening around the world (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Castles, 1998, 2014; Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2013).

## **2.2. Internationalisation and globalisation of higher education**

The effects of both internationalisation and globalisation on higher education have been a recent focus of higher education scholarship (Altbach, 2004; Altbach & Knight, 2007; De Wit, 2011; Knight, 2008; Scott, 2005). Altbach (2004) claims that internationalisation is the process that helps higher education to cope with the effects of globalisation. As indicated above, globalisation and internationalisation are different

in scale and scope; however, despite these differences, in public debate on higher education, “globalisation” and “internationalisation” often overlap and are intertwined and thus are often used as synonyms (Haigh, 2008; Teichler, 2004). Hence, it is difficult to draw a distinctive line between globalisation and internationalisation in current higher education debates (Altbach, 2004 ; De Wit, 2011; Scott, 2005). Following Knight (2008), I define internationalisation in the field of higher education as the process of integrating international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the goals, functions, and operations of a higher education institution.

### ***2.2.1. Aspects of internationalisation***

In order to “internationalise”, universities have had to radically rethink many aspects of their operations and day-to-day practices (Altbach, 2003; Altbach, Androushchak, Kuzminov, Yudkevich, & Reisberg, 2013; Haigh, 2008; Teichler, 2004). Several changes in university practices have been reported by scholars and practitioners as strategies or results of internationalisation (Blight et al., 1999). In particular, these factors are associated with growing numbers of international student enrolments, the introduction of the new courses or adjustments to the course content and methods of curriculum delivery, the current trends of academic staff recruitment, and research cooperation practices.

The first aspect of internationalisation, the expansion of the numbers of fee-paying international student numbers, has become a priority for many universities (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Cerych & Sabatier, 1986; De Wit, 2002, 2011; Knight, 2004; Marginson, 2006, 2010; A. Welch, 1997). Indeed, in Australia international students are seen as not only revitalizing the higher education system, but also contributing to the host country economy, society and culture. As the numbers of international students grow,



universities are faced with new challenges to deal with improving students' well-being and safety, along with assuring the programs offered are of acceptable quality and international standard (Marginson, 2010). Some believe that attracting a significant number of international students is the key to the internationalisation of a university; however, many others are concerned that this activity is not enough to provide genuine internationalisation at the universities (Knight, 2008, 2015a; Leask, 2015).

Another element of university internationalisation sees changes to the curriculum and course delivery methods, which are adjusted to comply with internationally accredited programs and global themes (De Vita & Case, 2003; De Wit, 2002; Leask, 2009, 2015; Luxon & Peelo, 2009; Smith 2013, 2014). Ideally, international perspectives are incorporated into learning programs and research activities, including on-campus and extracurricular university activities (Byram & Dervin, 2009; Leask, 2015). Many teachers and learners have embraced cultural diversity in the classroom. Participation not only in physical, but also in virtual mobility activities can open intercultural horizons of both the students and academic staff. It is important, though, to ensure students become a part of the local university culture, as there is evidence that international students tend to “band together and ironically often have a broader and more meaningful intercultural experience on campus than domestic students, without having any deep engagement with the host country culture” (Knight, 2015a). All students should be engaged in international learning perspectives, for example, study-abroad programs, scholarships for foreign students to study on-campus, off-shore program delivery, curriculum enrichment via international majors, and international and visiting academics' programs (Knight, 2013; Siaya & Hayward, 2003; Smith, 2013, 2014).

Academic mobility and changes to academic staff recruitment policies and practices are also affected by the internationalisation of higher education. Indeed, academic mobility is not only about international students' presence in the classrooms, but also about employment and exchange opportunities for international academics and university administration staff (Byram & Dervin, 2009; Dervin, 2011). In Australia this process includes local academics working interstate or overseas as new campuses are opened elsewhere, and scholars coming to work at Australian universities as visiting academics or permanently. The borders between migration, short-term mobility, and circular transnational mobility are increasingly blurred, so it is difficult to distinguish between permanent and temporary academic migration (Bauder, 2012; Jones et al., 2015; Jones & de Wit, 2012; Kim, 2009).

Internationalisation processes, including academic mobility, have invigorated the research collaboration and networking activities at many universities. A growing number of joint projects, research exchange programs and international research agreements indicate the importance of the global context (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010). International and national bodies contribute to the creation of inter-institutional, interdisciplinary and international research networks that address global level topics of environment, energy and health (Larner, 2014). The research findings are actively communicated through a number of joint publications and presentations at local and international conferences, seminars, and workshops. The increase of various forms of international research collaboration networks and academic migration promote ongoing cross-border knowledge exchange between universities and individual researchers, which might further enhance the competitiveness, prestige, and strategic alliances of an institution (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In addition,

international research collaboration and networking can lead to the development of cultural competence and better mutual understanding.

### ***2.2.2. Disadvantages and challenges of internationalisation***

Notwithstanding that “internationalization has become a synonym of doing good, and [...] an instrument to improve the quality of education or research” (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015, p. 16), significant problems with internationalisation and globalisation in higher education have also been identified (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015; Knight, 2012; Marginson, 2011). Some of the challenges are associated with the neo-liberal economic approaches that encourage commodification of higher education, the lessening of the quality of scholarship, and the global preference for English as the language of tuition (Greenwood, 2012; Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009).

In the university setting neoliberalism is viewed as a theory of “political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade” (Harvey, 2007, p. 2).

Operating in the “free market” space means that resources and opportunities are allocated through a self-regulated market and the expectation that an individual is an economically self-interested subject, who can be the best judge of his or her own consumer needs (Blight et al., 1999; Olssen & Peters, 2005). In this context, education is perceived as a commodity, a service or product to be traded in the marketplace (Blum & Ullman, 2012; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Ong, 2003). In addition, the system of global university rankings helps customers choose in the new education marketplace by comparing universities’ reputation and research performance (Marginson, 2007).

Therefore, universities and academics find themselves competing for fee-paying students and research project funding. International students become a prime target for increasing university revenue through tuition fees; education has become the third largest export sector of Australia (Universities Australia, 2017; Austrade.gov.au, 2017). Following neoliberal perceptions, education is less focused on the public and social good, and becomes more of an individual advancement to serve private interests (Blum & Ullman, 2012; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Moreover, universities' emphasis on marketing, export of programmes and international profile building is not always focused on providing quality university education (Kehm & Teichler, 2007; Knight, 2012; Marginson, 2000, 2006, 2010). The results raise concerns about: student educational and cultural readiness to undertake university courses (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Devos, 2003; Huang, Finkelstein, & Rostan, 2014; Leask, 2015); difference in teaching methods, practices and expectations (Benson, Heagney, Hewitt, Crosling, & Devos, 2014; El-Khawas, 2007); relevance of assessment and literacy standards (Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008; Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017; Sadler, 2013); and the rationality of marking standards (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Devos, 2003; Sadler, 2013). To address these issues and the mismatch of expectations, both students and university staff are expected to adjust. To accommodate internationalisation, global and intercultural aspects are introduced into the curriculum, and teaching and assessment practices are being modified (Benson et al., 2014; Devos, 2003). Much is spoken about the need to support students in building their social networks, in developing necessary levels of intercultural competency and academic literacy, and in overcoming the emotional challenges associated with successful learning (Andrade, 2006; Deardorff, 2006;

Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017). In practice, however, internationalisation and consumerism can push some academics to lower the standards of achievement they require from students and to modify their pedagogic strategies to achieve the outcomes demanded by the student market (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Devos, 2003; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005).

Another negative effect of globalisation on higher education – particularly in Australia – is the dominance of English in the academic, professional, communication, and legislative spheres (Dovchin, Pennycook, & Sultana, 2018; Pennycook, 2017), which is very noticeable in the field of higher education (Andrade, 2006; Braine, 2013; Leki, 2017; Richards & Renandya, 2002). This is further exacerbated by the ways in which English is treated as a commodity in the international education market (Cameron, 2000; Blum & Ullman, 2012; Greenwood, 2012; Olszen & Peters, 2005; Ong, 2003). Indeed, with English being the academic lingua franca in higher education, it is not surprising that multilingual and international students in the universities of Anglophone countries are expected to adopt English language and literacy practices (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2011). Admittedly, there is a concern that English language skills are not always sufficiently developed during higher education degrees (Benzie, 2010; Watty, 2007) and that professional employability of international graduates in Australia might thus be compromised. To address these issues, many institutions have reviewed their international student support programs and expanded English language courses (Leask, 2015; Leask & Carroll, 2011). Unfortunately, the preference for English language can weaken students' interest in learning other foreign languages and attitudes to their own national culture, further undermining the opportunities to embrace diversity in the multicultural university (O'Grady, 2014;

Watkins & Smith, 2018). The emergence of the multiple off-shore delivery programs adds further complexity to the relationships between English as the language of instruction, fair access to programmes, and the quality of teaching and learning (Altbach, 2002; Hughes, 2008). So, while there are distinct attractions of Australian universities in terms of their use of English, this aspect of globalisation can also be seen to be somewhat exploitative.

In summary, internationalisation in the field of higher education has introduced a number of important benefits and challenges. Besides boosting the competitiveness of the universities and academic mobility, and providing technological and collaboration opportunities, internationalisation has also brought a number of complexities.

Internationalisation can enhance the shift in the perception of higher education from being a “public good” to a “private commodity”; breed university reliance on the revenue from international student fees; permit a decrease in standards and expectations of student achievement; and can license the dominance of English.

However, “internationalisation” refers not only to the practical changes in curriculum and the teaching, assessment and research practices, but also to the broader project of educating planetary “citizens that feel at home in the world” (Haigh, 2008). Indeed, globalisation and internationalisation together are pushing universities to ensure their graduates are able to compete in the global work market; are skilled to perform professionally and socially in multicultural and international workplaces; and can act responsibly to negotiate the diverse uncertainties of the broader world around them. Against the background of these changes, universities are witnessing an increase of academic mobility, international collaboration and academic knowledge transfer.

### **2.3. Academic mobility**

Historically, academics have always been mobile: they travelled between cultural centres in Ancient Greece, in the Middle Ages between European and Arab countries, in the 15th-19th centuries between Europe and its colonies, and from the 20<sup>th</sup> century until now globally (Bauder, 2012; Kim, 2009, 2010; Taylor, Hoyler, & Evans, 2008). Over time, the concept of academic mobility has developed from the “wandering scholar” (Pietsch, 2010) phenomenon to recently becoming a part of the complex set of interdependencies between (and social consequences of) a number of diverse mobilities of people, objects, images, and information (Elliott & Urry, 2010). People can be seen as the greatest asset that underpins economic success of a country (Porter & Ketels, 2003), hence the global economy competes not only for goods and services, but also for people. Therefore, it is not surprising that highly skilled academics are often a target for universities and/or international head-hunting companies. Talent should be attracted, utilized and retained if possible, and should be understood not as a “stock”, but a flow (Florida, 2006). Indeed, academics represent mobile creative talent that theoretically is able to facilitate innovation and knowledge-based economic growth of the host country. The phenomenon of academic mobility is often seen as the most important dimension of internationalisation for higher education (Egroun-Polak, 2017; Egroun-Polak & Hudson, 2014) and universities all over the world promote mobility of staff and students as a critical aspect of their learning and professional development experience (Altbach et al., 2013; Robertson, 2010; Yudkevich, Altbach, & Rumbley, 2016).

### **2.3.1. Definition of “academic mobility”**

“Academic mobility” includes numerous forms of engagement with education and refers to movements of students, academic experts, intellectuals, and academic managers in the higher education space (Egron-Polak, 2017; Kim, 2010). Some researchers consider it mostly as short-term inter-institutional academic movements (El-Khawas, 2007; Etzkowitz, Webster, Gebhardt, & Terra, 2000); for some it equals international student mobility (De Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2013; Teichler, 2012; Tremblay, 2004); while a bigger group of scholars perceives academic mobility as the international activity of both students and staff members (Bauder, 2012; Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Byram & Dervin, 2009; Hoffman, 2008; Hugo, 2009, 2013; Hugo & Morriss, 2010; Knight, 2004). Other scholars focus on the embodiment of knowledge as people travel across territories (Fahey & Kenway, 2010; Kim, 2010). Thus, academic mobility includes not only geographical movements of people, but also knowledge travelling across existing knowledge fields in various forms, sometimes independently of the actors (Ackers & Gill, 2008; Barnett, 2014; Elliott & Urry, 2010). For the purposes of this study, the term “academic mobility” is defined as cross-national geographical movements of higher education students, lecturers, researchers and administrative staff of universities for the purpose of studying, researching or teaching.

### **2.3.2. Types of academic mobility**

There are various types of academic mobility: conventional, lateral, vertical, and generational (Hoffman, 2008). Conventional mobility is usually associated with short-term academic staff and information and technology-based mobility; it is often limited to academic circulation within a narrow geographical range or even virtual mobility (Blight et al., 1999; Hoffman, 2008; Schreurs, Verjans, & Van Petegem, 2006). In



contrast, lateral mobility is related to the crossing of national borders for academic work or study for over a year, which often leads to subsequent migration (Dekker, De Grip, & Heijke, 2002; Varghese, 2008). Both vertical (Hoffman, 2008) and spatial (Hazel, 2007) academic mobility are associated with social mobility, that is moving up or down the socio-economic scale (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Marginson, 2016; Milburn, 2012). Academic mobility and migration are also described as generational (Blanden, Gregg, & Machin, 2005), which directly relates to the repeated migration experiences and practices of switching countries and cultures by several generations (Hoffman, 2008; Hugo, 2013), sometimes labelled as “circular” to indicate frequent movements between the origin and destination countries (Hugo, 2013; Kim, 2009, 2010; Vertovec, 2007). Return migration is usually distinguished from circular migration, though there is in reality little difference between them (Hugo, 2013); even “permanent” migration can include continued movement between countries for prolonged periods. Kim (2009, 2010) very helpfully explains further that the practices of return and circular migration are becoming typical patterns of transnational academic mobility.

### ***2.3.3. Brain drain versus brain circulation***

Circular migration may reduce the risk of “brain drain” (Hugo, 2013), that is, when well-educated, talented citizens leave their home country for extended (possibly permanent) periods abroad for improved conditions of living and professional development, including further research and/or academic work opportunities.

Academic mobility is sometimes perceived as one factor intensifying brain drain (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005). The number of people leaving their country of residence greatly depends on the sending and hosting countries’ political, economic and social

profile (Bentley, Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure, & Meek, 2013; Fahey & Kenway, 2010; S. Robertson, 2006): most often developing countries or those with repressive regimes lose their most educated people to more industrialised Western countries. “Brain drain” mobility may threaten the stability of some countries as it often contributes to slowing their growth by making already wealthy economies richer at the expense of the poorer countries (Saxenian, 2005; Tanner, 2005; Todaro, 1985). However, in an era of universal labour mobility and global changes, the concept of “brain-drain” is being progressively replaced by the concepts of “brain circulation” and “talent flow” (Carr et al., 2005), as the old pattern of one-way flows of people, goods and knowledge is replaced by more complex and decentralised two-way transnational flows of skills, knowledge and technology (Bentley, Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure, & Meek, 2013; Kim, 2009, 2010; Saxenian, 2005).

#### ***2.3.4. Features of academic mobility and migration***

Clearly there is a close relationship between academic mobility and migration. Indeed, the terms mobility and migration are sometimes used as synonyms and this slippage has found its way into the higher education sector as well. Scholars in the field often use the terms academic mobility and academic migration interchangeably, indicating there is not much difference between them (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Jung, Kooij, & Teichler, 2014). R. King (2002) argues that there is never a straightforward boundary between migration and mobility, while Dervin (2011) underlines that the terms “academic mobility” and “academic migration” should not be confused with one another, but could be seen as “research companions”. In contrast, Jöns (2009) notes that the term academic mobility is used more widely in the academic and research literature and sometimes covers the “professionally motivated geographical

movements of students and academics along a continuum between temporary mobility and permanent migration” (Jöns, 2009, p. 318). Some scholars consider that a term “academic migrant” a blanket term that “shrouds an underlying diversity” (Kinchin et al., 2018, p. 6). While the term “academic migrant” may have different meaning to different people, in this study it is understood to be a person who, of his or her own free will, has spent more than 12 months outside their country of origin for the purposes of university study or work. The focus of this study is on the academic staff (including ex-USSR academics in postgraduate research in South Australian universities) who are at different stages of their cross-national migration process and settlement in Australia.

In recent times, academic mobility and academic migration have become systematic, dense, multiple and transnational (Kim, 2010). There is a perception that it is easy for highly educated and professionally successful people to move across borders because they possess the relevant competencies for cross-border communication and exchange (Faist, 2013). In particular, some scholars observe that “now academe is one of the most internationally mobile of all professions” (Bentley et al., 2013a, p. 9). However, not every academic or student is able or wants to become mobile, as academic mobility and migration have been “conditioned and constrained by the regional and international political and economic relations of power” (Kim, 2009): quite often moving to another country for study or work demands much time, effort and resources. On the same note, Castles (2010) following Bauman (1998) observes that mobility has become more class-specific and selective than ever, which can further constrain academic mobility in some countries.

More than that, there is evidence that mobility can have social and emotional consequences for those who are mobile (Elliott & Urry, 2010; Hosein, Rao, Yeh, & Kinchin, 2018; Maadad & Tight, 2014); and academic mobility might intensify social differences within the global higher education system (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Faist, Bilecen, Barglowski, & Sienkiewicz, 2014; Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes, & Skeldon, 2012; Marginson, 2007). Despite the fact that access to higher education has increased and widened in many places, academic mobility continues to be seen as a privilege due to the world hierarchy of universities and employment opportunities, as “educational difference in a globalising HE [higher education] system seems to influence the probability of an individual accessing favoured positions in the global labour market” (Findlay et al., 2012, p. 122). Indeed, although international spatial mobility is often considered to be a means to upward social mobility (Beck, 2005; Breen & Jonsson, 2005; Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Marginson, 2016) and is usually associated with empowerment, it also produces and reproduces inequalities (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Schaer, Dahinden, & Toader, 2017).

### ***2.3.5. Academic staff mobility***

To understand the effects and consequences of academic mobility on the life and work of academic migrants and associated motivations for migration, academic mobility has been explored from the human subject’s perspective. For instance, students and staff have been researched within one location or institution (Byram & Dervin, 2009; Byram & Feng, 2006; Da Wan & Sirat, 2018; Ehrenreich, 2008; Huang, 2018; Kinchin et al., 2018; Potts, 2005, 2014), by discipline (Jons, 2007), by gender (Jöns, 2011; Schaer et al., 2017), and by migration chronology and lifecycle (Cantwell, 2011; Cohen & Duncan, 2016; Hosein et al., 2018; Leemann, 2010; Leung, 2017). Purposeful academic mobility

has become an important part of an academic career and a valuable institutional and personal resource for academic recognition, reputation and collaboration (Byram & Dervin, 2009; Dervin, 2011; Fahey & Kenway, 2010; Tremblay, 2004). However, there are some less positive accounts of international academics' experiences, ranging from a perceived need to disguise any cultural differences from the local academic workforce (Guerin & Green, 2016; Jiang et al., 2010) to the extremes of alienation and cultural non-inclusion (Kim & Brooks, 2012; Saltmarsh & Swirski, 2010). While many academic mobility researchers are mostly focused on students' migration experiences (Findlay et al., 2012; Guruz, 2011; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007), international staff of the universities have not been systematically researched (Altbach, Reisberg, Yudkevich, Androushchak, & Pacheco, 2012; Hugo, 2005; Kim & Brooks, 2012; Maadad & Tight, 2014; Teichler, 2010; Yudkevich et al., 2016).

Thousands of academics from overseas moved to Australian universities in the last two decades to work, research, and study (Hugo, 2006, 2008a; Hugo & Harris, 2011; Kuptsch et al., 2006). There are few statistics available on international academic staff employment; however, existing data for 2006 and 2010 indicates 40.5% of academic staff in Australian universities were overseas-born (Coates et al., 2009; Hugo & Morriss, 2010). In addition, Hugo (2014) demonstrates that the number of long term arrivals of international academics migrants has been steadily rising since 1997, despite a small drop in 2010-11.

Competition to get a job in the Australian academy is high: new academic positions are created infrequently, the existing ones tend to disappear when academics retire and casual opportunities are irregular (Brown, Goodman, & Yasukawa, 2010). Despite

these tendencies, international academics, including those from the post-Soviet countries, find their way to working at the South Australian universities.

Academic mobility is key to understanding the experiences of international staff working at universities. Academic staff mobility is part of the complex transnational flows of skills, knowledge and technology conceptualised as “brain circulation”. The subjects of this circulation, transnationally mobile academic staff, demonstrate the lived experience of participation in the internationalisation of higher education from the perspective of individual migrants and their careers. This notion of academic mobility needs to be understood in the context of theories of migration and settlement.

#### **2.4. Migration theories**

International migration impacts a huge percentage of the world’s population in some way or another and it is likely that the social and cultural worlds of those who are not international migrants themselves will be influenced or changed by the migration processes happening around them (Castles, 2013; Castles et al., 2013). Both sending and receiving countries are affected by these processes by either providing extra human resources or draining them.

There is no single coherent theory of international migration to which all scholars in this field adhere; rather, migration studies offer a number of theories and approaches that are quite isolated from one another. Traditionally, scholars do not separate internal from international migration, as both are often driven by similar processes of social, cultural, demographic, economic and political change; thus, the boundaries between these types of migration are often blurred (Castles, 2013; King & Skeldon, 2010). A number of theories, models, theoretical approaches and frameworks exist to

describe and explain migration and mobility, which are combined into several broad categories: functionalist, historical-structural, transitional and contemporary theories of migration (Brettell & Hollifield, 2014; Castles, 2007b, 2013, 2017; Castles et al., 2013; Dustmann & Weiss, 2007; Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, & Pellegrino, 1999; Massey et al., 1993). The focus of this section is to describe migration theories that are most important in informing this study. It also explains why the social transformation approach is the most valuable in understanding the migration experience of my particular study participants.

#### ***2.4.1. Functionalist migration theories***

Functionalist migration theories include neoclassical theories and push-pull models, which regard migration as a positive phenomenon that serves the interests of the people and contributes to equality within and between societies (Castles, 1998). These theories work both at micro and macro levels (Massey et al., 1999). Neoclassical theories of migration claim that people are inspired to move mostly because of financial (and also some psychological) benefits (Harris & Todaro, 1970; Todaro & Smith, 2012) and thus focus on labour and employment as the key elements in migration. According to this theory, migration is caused by the differences in employment markets in different countries that lead to variations in wages, thus creating labour-rich versus capital-rich countries (Bauer & Zimmermann, 1999a; Massey et al., 1993). However, migrants are not necessarily the poorest individuals and most labour does not actually come from the poorest countries; instead, migration is often associated with considerable financial costs (de Haas, 2009; Dustman et al., 2003; Faist, 2000). Although neoclassical theory has significant purchase in the field of migration studies and some researchers argue that it currently dominates academic

research on the migration determinants (Kurekova, 2011), this theory is not entirely suitable for my study as it does not engage sufficiently with the experiences of migration.

The push-pull theory of migration, following neoclassical theories, further examines the factors that motivate people to move to other places to work, study and live (Altbach, 1998; De Haas, 2010b; Kline, 2003; Portes & Böröcz, 1989; Schoorl, Heering, Esveldt, Groenewold, & Van der Erf, 2000; Zimmermann, 1996). According to this theory, migration is driven by political, economic, social and cultural factors that “push” people to leave their home countries and “pull” them to choose the specific country for future residence. While this theory is useful in explaining the mechanisms of migration, the push and pull factors in different countries are often complex and can also be mirror-images of each other (Kurekova, 2011), so it is not always possible to clearly separate them. Further, this theory fails to adequately address migrants’ personal characteristics and their motivations, behaviours and choices. Indeed, neither neoclassical nor push-pull theories talk about the ability of migrants to make decisions and choices, offering little to account for human agency (Castles et al., 2013). Therefore, although functionalist migration theories offer some useful insights, the current study requires additional theoretical approaches to migration to fully explain the human factors.

#### ***2.4.2. Historical-structural migration theories***

In contrast to functional theories, historical-structural theories provide an alternative explanation of migration. They highlight how political, economic, social and cultural structures direct and constrain the behaviour of the individual, thereby reinforcing social and geographical inequalities. These theories draw on the concepts of Marxist



political economy and human capital theory. According to Marxist political economy, the movements of people are forced by political and economic structural powers that are unequally distributed between countries (Castles et al., 2013; Erel, 2010; Gilpin, 2016; Resnick & Wolff, 1989). Therefore, some classes have access to various economic resources; those who do not are forced to relocate. These externally forced movements open migrants to exploitation and poverty, while using them as cheap labour to make the rich richer (Cohen, 1996). This theory focuses on economic and political development and the crises of capitalist societies, as well as the social conflicts that undermine capitalism (which is outside the focus of this study). Taking these views of into account, Todaro (1969), following Sjaadstad (1962), has applied the broader view of neoclassical theory to the micro-level model of individual choice to develop a human capital theory of migration. This theory usually employs quantitative methods and models to calculate the tendency to migrate depending on the family structure, age and skills.

Human capital theory is useful for exploring labour relations, human capital and geographical mobility; however, while beginning to address the human element of migration, it does little to help us understand the lived experiences of migrants.

### ***2.4.3. Contemporary theories of migration***

In contrast to the neoclassical and historical-structural theories that do not fully explain the complexity of migration and the “interplay of individuals, motivations and contexts” (Massey et al., 1993, p. 16), contemporary theories of migration provide a more comprehensive understanding of the migratory processes as they take key ideas from different disciplines and move towards “more holistic understandings of the migratory process” (Castles, 2007, p.9). Among the most commonly used theories in

this group are “transitional” theories and “other contemporary” theories of migration. Transitional theories, such as double or segmented labour market theories, globalisation theory, and the new economics of labour migration theory, examine global transitions in terms of fertility, mortality, and urbanisation as the background to migration transition and its variants (Skeldon, 2012). In contrast, migration network and migration systems theories examine how various types of connections and networks impact migration flows by altering social, cultural and sometimes economic conditions of the sending and receiving countries (De Haas, 2009). Other contemporary theories of migration, for example, transnational and social transformation theories, highlight the role of human agency of migrants in overcoming structural constraints of migration (Castles et al., 2013).

#### **2.4.3.1. Transitional theories of migration**

The founder of transitional theories, Zelinsky (1971, 1979), holds that there is a direct correlation between stages of demographic transition and types of population movement (that is, migration). For example, double or segmented market labour theories tie mobility and migration to the processes of industrial development and economic integration. Scholars base their models on the assumption that fluctuations of migration and population growth levels depend on the curve of industrial economy development and labour supply (Skeldon, 1997; Taylor & Martin, 2001; Zelinsky, 1971). Similarly, globalisation theory demonstrates that globalisation impacts on migration processes in the areas of production structures, labour markets and social inequalities (Castles et al., 2013). These theories also imply there is a certain independence between sending and receiving regions in terms of migration and social-economic factors and take into consideration such factors as race, gender, level of education and

legal status. One of the weaknesses of these transition theories is that they assume that development and demographic changes in a country will automatically lead to certain migration transitions and outcomes, which can be irreversible or inevitable (Castles et al., 2013).

According to the new economics of labour migration theory, most individuals make migration decisions together as part of a community group or household; thus, risk-sharing behaviour and pooling of the resources to be more sustainable in the new country of residence must be acknowledged (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Stark & Levhari, 1982; Taylor, 1999). Importantly, this theory demonstrates that migrants are not passive, but can be pro-active and make their own decisions to improve their livelihoods (De Haan, 2000).

Migration network and migration systems theories further highlight the social issues underlying human migration. Migration links communities, people and families across space and time (Mabogunje, 1970) and thus is seen as an interconnecting network of the flows of people, goods, ideas and money. According to these theories, social, cultural and economic conditions in both the sending and receiving countries are altered by migration, creating a developmental space for the migration processes to operate (De Haas, 2009). The migration network model explores the existing pre-migration links between sending and receiving countries, for example, colonial ties, trade and investment flows (Castles et al., 2013). Due to the development of multiple intrapersonal network connections in one geographic area, migration can be seen as self-perpetuating (Massey, 1990). However, the network theory does not explain why in some cases circular migration does not occur and why chain migration weakens or is exceptional for many migrant communities (De Haas, 2010a). Migration systems

theory explores networks and feedback dynamics and highlights their importance for understanding migration, as the migration-facilitating feedback mechanisms may counteract migration-undermining feedback (De Haas, 2010a). Indeed, the dynamics of feedback can often change the initial conditions under which migration takes place and thus influence migration aspirations (Castles et al., 2013; De Haas, 2010a). This theoretical approach reveals that the flows of migration could be controlled by way of developing effective migration networks and feedback mechanisms that will reduce the risks and costs of migration to subsequent migrants. Theoretical perspectives of the network and migration systems models are relevant to this study as they demonstrate how already settled migrants create their community infrastructure and set up connections to provide subsequent migrants with information and settlement support.

The transitional theories of migration discussed above are important for this study as they draw attention to how migration is an “intrinsic part of broader processes of development and social transformation and globalization” (Castles, de Haas, 2013, p.47). These theories highlight that migrants’ agency, their networks, and feedback can support self-sustainability of the migration processes. Yet scholars agree that these theories and models are not persuasive in explaining why migration to new places occurs, nor what causes migration flows and networks to decline and even stagnate (de Haas, 2010b; Castles, 2013). However, while the weaknesses of these theoretical perspectives are outside the scope of this study, their strengths in being more focused on the migrants’ agency is important and highly relevant for this project.

### **2.4.3.2 Other contemporary theories of migration**

Transnational theories of migration and the social transformation approach try to further explain transnational migration. They argue that the improvements in communication, transport and technologies have caused the emergence of transnational migration and that the rise of human mobility is the result of irreversible changes in economy, politics and society (Fouron & Schiller, 2001; Portes, 1999; Vertovec, 1999). According to the theories of transnational migration, a distinctive feature of transnational migrants is that they maintain networks, communication and relationships with their home countries, despite having migrated to another country. The concept of “diaspora” is often used in regard to transnational scientific communities (Faist, 2008; Levitt, 2000; Vertovec, 2001). Levitt (2000) explains that a diaspora comprises people:

who tend to know one another personally or have family members or acquaintances in common during the early phases of community formation. They form organizations that express their identity as a transnational group. They exhibit some level of self-consciousness about belonging to a community spanning borders. (Levitt, 2000, p. 461)

While transnational theories engage a discourse about national diaspora and migrant communities, they do little to address the variety of migration experiences influenced by language, gender, social class, nationality, sexuality, and colour; nor do they pay sufficient attention to motivations, meanings, attitudes, feelings and individual agency (Vertovec, 2004, 2009). However, it is precisely these ideas about an academic diaspora, transnational communities, feelings of attachment to more than one

country, and the potential emergence of multiple identities that are highly relevant to this study. Thus, while transnational theories of migration are useful to this study, they are insufficient as a theoretical framework for the whole project.

According to the social transformation approach, migration is seen as an essential part of the broader processes of social and economic transformations happening globally (Castles, 2009, 2010; Castles et al., 2013; De Haas, 2010b), not just a side effect of an individual nation's development (De Haas, 2007). Transformation of social organisation is organised is driven by the fundamental shifts in economic, political and military affairs (Castles, 2007a). Strong demand for skilled migration was created by such global neoliberal trends as privatisation, individualisation, welfare support and declining community solidarity on the one hand, and local trends of population aging, fertility decline and changes in employment conditions on the other hand (Schierup, Hansen, & Castles, 2006). Skilled migration often happens in the environment of rapid change, uncertainty and insecurity for host populations, presenting migrants as the markers of the social change processes (Castles, 2007a). In addition, this environment is often associated with increased violence and the potential rise of extremist racist groups (Schierup et al., 2006). Castles (2010) asserts that migration is a part of the wider phenomena of social transformation; Portes (2010), in contrast, argues that although migration processes and globalisation have caused change, the influence of migrants on the host society is not sufficient to change the existing social order. However, both Castles and Portes agree that globalisation has brought profound transformation to the societies of many countries. Immigrants become one of the most visible symbols of the changes brought by globalisation (Castles, 2000, p. 128), leaving us wondering whether "nomadism is replacing sedentarism as one of the dominant principles of

social order” (Faist, 2013, p.1644). The social transformation approach to migration guides me to examine the interaction between global and local factors and to use the methodology of qualitative research in investigating human agency of the migrants, as well as their sending and receiving communities, to understand how migration can influence communities and societies (Castles, 2007a).

Clearly, migration is of a very complex and diverse nature and thus it requires analysis on multiple levels and with methodological tools from more than one discipline (Massey et al, 1993; Castles 2008b; Kurekova, 2011; Hugo, 2011, de Haas, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). The complexity of migration cannot be covered by a single theory; hence, while taking into consideration the theoretical perspectives outlined above, this study is guided by the social transformation approach, exploring the “interaction of local-level factors immediately influencing people’s migration decisions and strategies with a range of political, economic and social factors” (Collinson, 2009). Due to the focus of the study being on the academic mobility and migration to Australia from post-Soviet countries, and, in particular, on the migrants’ experiences in South Australian higher education, the theories, models and theoretical approaches mentioned above are used in combination with the settlement theories that are described further in this chapter.

## **2.5. Theories of settlement**

Several settlement theories, including assimilation, biculturalism, and acculturation have guided the development of the migration policies in Australia. Importantly for the study focus, these theories have influenced settlement strategies and practices of migrants and also Australians’ attitudes towards migration. The migration process involves several stages from initial motivation, through numerous legal and

experiential processes, to the settlement period. Thus, this study distinguishes between pre-migration, a brief arrival/transition period, and post-arrival/settlement. During the pre-migration period opportunities are researched, networks established (if possible) and the decision taken. However, despite careful research and planning, migrants are often surprised on arrival. The extensive period of settlement can be experienced with varying degrees of comfort and confusion. The settlement period has been the focus of migration studies for decades. Migration theorists have explored a range of concepts to explain this period and the theories that are most important for this study – theories of assimilation, biculturalism, and acculturation – are briefly summarised below.

### ***2.5.1. Definition of “settlement”***

The term “settlement” is widely used in population studies, human geography and other social-cultural studies. The Australian National Population Council follows the definition provided by the Australian Department of Immigration:

[Settlement is] the process by which an immigrant establishes economic viability and social networks following immigration to contribute to, and make full use of, opportunities generally available in the receiving society. (DIMIA, 1996, p1)

This definition assumes that migrants are to adjust, while the receiving society provides opportunities and facilities to do so. The present study, however, follows a wider definition of the term that first appeared in the comprehensive review of post-arrival programs and services for migrants in Australia by Galbally (1978):



[Settlement involves] the complex process of adjusting to a new environment following migration. It is a long-term process affecting all immigrants. Its end point is the acceptance by and the feeling of belonging to the receiving society. It implies change both in the individual immigrant and the host society. (Galbally, 1978, p. 29)

This definition is seen as more useful as it does highlight that both the receiving country and migrant population is changed by migration processes, therefore supporting the ideas of multiculturalism that are explored in Chapter 3 in more detail. In line with this definition, several approaches to theorising this period have been developed.

### ***2.5.2. Assimilation model***

Early studies of migration approach settlement uni-dimensionally. The assimilation model formulated by Park (1950) and developed further by Gordon (1964, 1978), who postulated that a person would be regarded as settled when he or she is not distinguishable from the other members of the dominant cultural group of the receiving country. According to this model, the process of gradual absorption of migrants into the dominant culture takes place on both the individual and group levels. The assimilation settlement strategy can include various components, most commonly: cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, spatial assimilation, and identification assimilation (Gordon, 1964; Schoen and Cohen, 1980; Massey, 1985; South et al., 2005). Cultural assimilation involves, for example, changes in the language migrants speak, their food consumption and shopping patterns, and their ways of dressing and entertaining (Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006; Taft, 1986); marital values, traditions and religious identification could also be altered due to assimilation

(Gordon, 1978). Gordon's assimilation theory was further elaborated to include socio-economic factors of migrant adaptation, resulting in a segmented assimilation theory (Portes, 1995; Portes & Zhou, 1996; Rumbaut, 1994; Zhou, 1997). According to this theory, assimilation is not necessarily a linear or unidirectional process and depends on the social modes of reception and distinct modes of immigrant adaptation (Rumbaut, 1994). Migrants can become assimilated into the dominant culture through acculturation and integration into the middle class (conventional upward assimilation) or assimilation into the underclass (downward assimilation); some, however, are not assimilated, preserving their national and ethnic traditions and community networks (selective acculturation) (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994).

The distinctive feature of most assimilation theories is their assumption that the aim of the migrants' acculturation is to erase their ethnic identity in favour of the national identity of the dominant society. In essence, classical assimilation theory expects migrants to undergo "a gradual, uniform process of upward mobility and incorporation into society's mainstream" (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2005, p. 1002). The assimilation (popularly labelled the "melting pot" framework) is both a social process and an ideology; in many cases it involves the introduction and domination of Eurocentric ways of being, along with the assignment of inferiority and otherness to non-European people (Ngo, 2008). For instance, in Australia assimilation was the main government policy until changes to the migration policies were introduced in the 1970s. Following these changes, the assimilation theory was acknowledged to be "imposing ethnocentric and patronizing demands on minority peoples, struggling to retain their cultural and ethnic identity" (Alba & Nee, 1997, p. 827). Since the 1970s the term "assimilation" in the Australian context has nearly disappeared from the

public discourse, giving way to the term “multiculturalism”. However, recent publications point out the retreat from multiculturalism and thus the term “integrationism” is being introduced as a substitute for the unpopular term “assimilation” (Hussein & Poynting, 2017; McPherson, 2010; Poynting & Mason, 2008). Still, the terms “melting pot”, “assimilation” and “integrationism” imply a simplistic identification of a migrant with either home or host country culture that is far from real life experience.

### **2.5.3. Biculturalism**

The assimilation discussion has given rise to the theories of biculturalism (Huynh, Nguyen, & Benet-Martínez, 2011; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Phinney, 2003; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997) and multidimensional ideas of acculturation (Berry, 1997, 2005; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Theories of biculturalism are closely interconnected with the acculturation framework that is described in section 2.5.4 in this chapter.

Biculturalism describes the ability to adhere to the values, traditions and behaviours that are consistent with both the heritage and host countries (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Schwartz & Unger, 2010; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Biculturalism is seen as a more balanced model of assimilation and an improvement on the unidimensional approach (Oudenhoven et al., 2006; Schwartz & Unger, 2010). On the one hand, some scholars believe that biculturalism is the ideal strategy of acculturation, because migrants develop equal competencies navigating the heritage and host cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Park & Kim, 2008) and can have the benefit of support from both cultures (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). On the other hand, others assert that the state of dealing with two (often quite different) cultures at

the same time can affect migrants' behaviour and health, for example, leading to stress, identity confusion and isolation (Barone, 2012; Berry, 1992, 2005; Gordon, 1978; Rudmin, 2003).

The advantage of this theoretical approach is that migrants do not necessarily have to belong solely to either their heritage or their host country. However, this advantage is somewhat outweighed by those who experience difficulties in identifying with both cultures simultaneously (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Oudenhoven et al., 2006). The theory of biculturalism is important for the current study as the foundation strategy for the development of multiculturalism (a concept that will be discussed in the following chapter); in particular, biculturalism usefully informs understanding of the changing attitudes to migration by Australian society. Nevertheless, as will become clear, this approach does not fully account for the multiculturalism that is central to the Australian story of migration.

#### ***2.5.4. Acculturation model***

Compared to biculturalism, multidimensional ideas of acculturation provide for a more nuanced understanding of the process of settlement in the new country. Traditionally, many theories of acculturation focus on the process of migrants' adjustment to the host culture that happens in a number of different spheres, thus allowing a certain degree of flexibility in terms of identification with the heritage and/or the host cultures (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). For example, migrants can have a good knowledge of the new customs and traditions, and be confident in the new language use, yet still follow the values of their homeland (Oudenhoven et al., 2006). However, following Berry (1997, 2005), acculturation is more complex as the host culture is also being modified by new migrants. Thus, acculturation is seen as the process of mutual

adaptation of two cultures (Fig.2.1) that can lead to different changes on the social and individual level.

According to Berry (2005), acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005, p. 698). To adapt to living in a new country, migrants employ various strategies: individuals sharing one culture would not often use identical acculturation strategies (Berry, 2009).

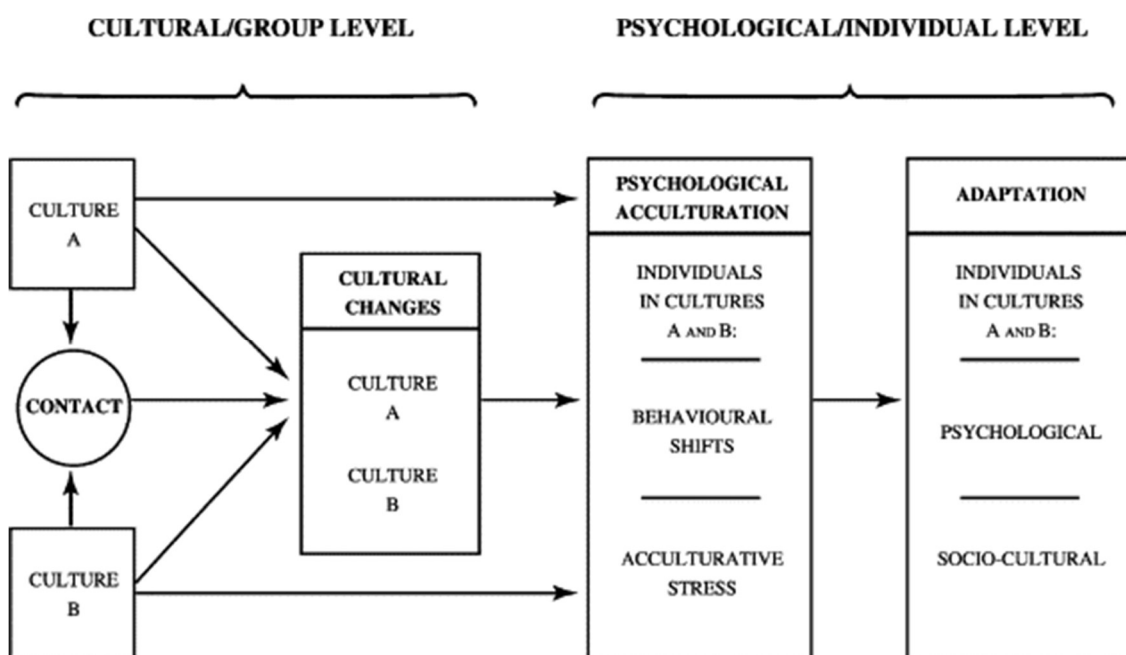


Fig 2.1. A general framework for understanding acculturation (Berry, 2005, p. 703)

The choice of the acculturation strategy might depend on the individual needs, intents, and the cultural and social contexts. To reflect these factors, Berry (1997) has proposed four general acculturation strategies that migrants might follow: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation (Fig. 2.2, left – Strategies of ethnocultural groups). These categories were further developed by Berry (2005, 2009) to reflect the interactions between the groups of migrants and the larger society of the host country (Fig 2.2., right – Strategies of larger society). The larger society reacts in

parallel to the settlement strategies of migrants: the assimilation of migrants results in a “melting pot” response in the broader community; integration of migrants results in multiculturalism. In less successful strategies, migrant groups who focus on separation from the broader community is perceived as segregation; and marginalisation of migrants becomes exclusion from mainstream society.

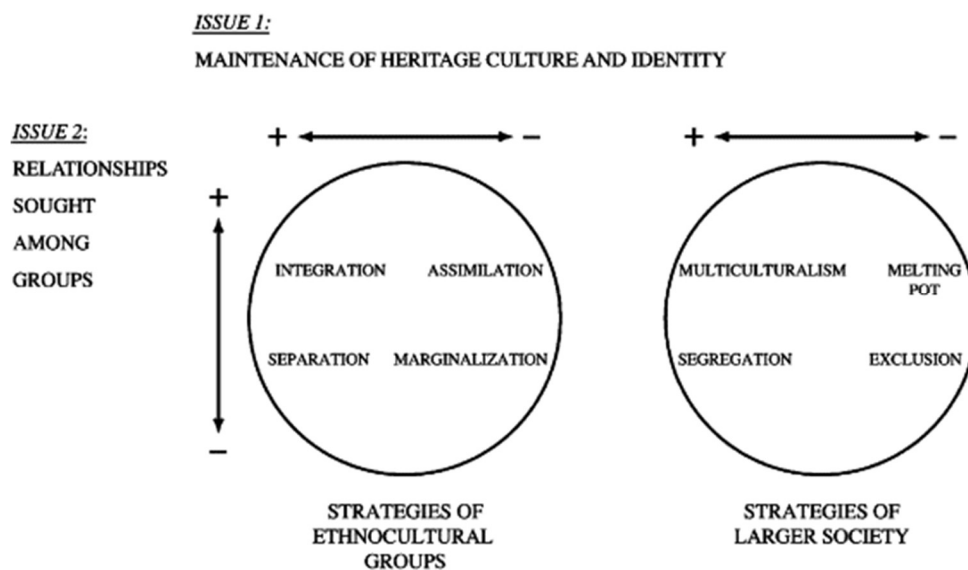


Fig. 2.2. Acculturation strategies of the ethnocultural groups and the larger society (Berry, 2005, p. 705).

Berry’s assimilation strategy Fig.2.2 above is quite similar to the assimilation theories approach described previously in this chapter (see, for example, works by Gordon, Portes, Zhou and Rumbaut cited in Section 2.5.2). These assimilation approaches focus on the migrant blending into the culture of the host country, rather than maintaining their home country cultural values and behaviour patterns. However, if migrants abandon their own culture and are unable to adjust to the new local culture (marginalization acculturation strategy), they often become socially disadvantaged and can find themselves pushed to the edge of society or excluded (Maisonneuve & Testé,

2007; Neto, 2002). The third strategy of acculturation is separation, according to which migrants choose to maintain and develop their own culture, follow their own traditions and adhere to their own customs and behaviour patterns, consequently, segregating themselves by avoiding interaction and communication with the host society. Finally, the integration strategy is employed when migrants are interested in developing a relationship with other social groups and at the same time maintain their own national culture. This strategy is the fundamental basis for the concept of multiculturalism that will be discussed in the following chapter. The integration strategy is seen to be the most helpful in adaptation in countries where ideas of cultural diversity and open settlement opportunities for migrants are supported in the broader society and immigration policy (Berry, 2005, 2009).

Berry's framework for understanding acculturation is of paramount importance to this study as it highlights the complexity and multidimensional nature of the acculturation processes and makes a clear distinction between acculturation strategies of assimilation and integration. Particularly relevant to this case study based in Australia is the approach to settlement that integration acculturation strategy conveys: it implies that not only migrants themselves are being influenced by migration, but also the culture and people of the receiving country.

It is widely reported that migrants do struggle to adjust and to adapt during the settlement stage of their migration (Furnham, 1993; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Sam & Berry, 2010; Y. Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). At the individual level acculturation usually includes such factors as culture shock (Berry, 1992, 1997, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1994) and cultural learning (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1994) as there is a distinction between psychological and socio-cultural

adaptation (Sam & Berry, 2010; Sam, Vedder, Liebkind, Neto, & Virta, 2008; Searle & Ward, 1990). Psychological aspects of adaptation to a new country are linked to emotional wellbeing and satisfaction, while socio-cultural adaptation is more about obtaining new social and cultural knowledge, skills and experience (Berry, 2005). Without a doubt, settlement is often the critical period in the lives of migrants: depending on the migrants' flexibility, adaptation and attitudes, settlement might be successful or not. Failure to succeed in settlement can become a cause for interstate migration and/or return and repatriation flows (Cassarino, 2013); it can even cause mental illness (Bhugra, 2004a, 2004b; Westerhof & Keyes, 2010).

The settlement and acculturation frameworks and models discussed above have been used to explore and assess settlement processes, migrants' settlement success and strategies for overcoming settlement challenges. I find that the most useful framework for my project is Berry's theory of acculturation. First, it reflects on two of the most important intercultural issues: the extent of the migrants' aspirations to maintain their heritage and culture on the one hand, and the degree of their readiness and ability to be open to the values of the new culture (or multiple cultures) of the host country. This model helps to distinguish between integrationism and assimilation. Second, this framework might be applied to the analysis of not only groups and societies, but individuals as well, serving as the basis for exploring different acculturation pathways experienced by migrants in different life situations. The outcome of the acculturation process often depends on a number of personal experiences before migration and during the process of acculturation itself; it also depends on the context of the host country environment, its culture and community members' acculturation expectations (Hutnik, 1986; Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 2000). Thus, research into migrants'



settlement experiences should optimally consider not only the financial benefits of migration, but also such factors as lifestyle, environment, and feelings of security, connectedness and social inclusiveness.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented an overview of the literature and research that are important for understanding concepts associated with academic migration, in particular, the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education, academic mobility, and relevant theories of migration and settlement.

Discussion of the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education furnishes the wider conceptual background to the current study. Transnational flows of capital, services, knowledge and goods provide professionals (including academics and researchers) with migration opportunities to work in a university outside their home country. The internationalisation of higher education is one of the processes activated by globalisation; its impact can be seen in higher education policies and practices on global, national, institutional and individual levels. Indeed, internationalisation has pushed universities to adjust many policies and practices to better meet the needs of global education, ensure that quality and educational standards are met, and to ensure university graduates are skilled and competitive in the global employment market.

The literature demonstrates that one result of the internationalisation is academic mobility (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Byram & Dervin, 2009), which is the focus of this study. The lives and careers of academics and researchers are significantly influenced by academic mobility when they migrate. The concepts of brain drain and brain circulation flag the importance of knowledge dissemination and transfer that accompanies this migration, and draw attention to some of the social and emotional

consequences of academic mobility when seeking to understand the experiences of individual academics. The review of the scholarly literature on academic migration has demonstrated a focus on student mobility (Byram & Dervin, 2009; Findlay et al., 2012; Guruz, 2011; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007), but little research into academic staff mobility (Altbach, Reisberg, Yudkevich, Androushchak, & Pacheco, 2012; Huang, 2018; Hugo, 2005; Kim & Brooks, 2012; Maadad & Tight, 2014; Teichler, 2010; Yudkevich et al., 2016). To address this knowledge gap, the focus of this study is on the lived experiences of migrant academics and researchers in South Australian universities.

To understand the ideas of academic mobility and its perception by individuals, this chapter draws on a number of migration and settlement theories. Since there is no single comprehensive theory of migration, the theoretical base of the study employs a range of migration theories. Thus, neoclassical theories, especially push and pull theory, provide an explanation of the forces that might influence peoples' migration decisions. The "push" and "pull" factors, such as economic, social, political, and cultural aspects, are highly relevant to this study and thus are discussed in terms of the migration motivation factors that were experienced and reported by the study participants. The value of historical-structural and transitional theories to the study is in demonstrating the interrelatedness of globalisation, migration processes and economics, labour markets, and social inequalities (Castles et al., 2013). Moreover, these theories usefully focus on such variables as gender, age, race, legal status and education level of the migrants. Nevertheless, none of these theories on their own adequately explain the complexity of international migration and the role of the human agency in migration processes, hence I also look to contemporary theories of

migration, especially the social transformation approach, migration network and migration systems theories. These theories allow us to study the conditions in which migration takes place and also demonstrate that individual migrants, their households or their communities can make migration decisions, are able to exercise risk-sharing behaviour and also pool resources to adapt to living in the host country (De Haan, 2000; Stark & Bloom, 1985; Stark & Levhari, 1982). In the modern world, it is difficult to overestimate the influence of individual social networks in sustaining migration flows to certain locations (Massey et al., 1993); and migration network theories effectively point out the importance of pre-existing social networks that facilitate the progress of migration. Furthermore, the ideas of the transformation extracted from the migration systems theory and social transformation approach are highly relevant to my thesis, as academic mobility is a part of the broader migration process, which is in turn one fragment of the broader global processes of social and economic change (Castles et al., 2013; Castles, Vasta, & Ozkul, 2012).

However, none of the available migration theories sufficiently explain the challenges of migration for individual academic migrants. Thus, in addition to the migration theories, models and theoretical approaches, this study relies on a number of settlement theories to explore the individual experiences of migration. Berry's (1997, 2005) theory of acculturation complements the social transformation approach is, therefore, the most useful of the settlement theories for this study. Indeed, this theoretical model reinforces the ideas that both host and home cultures are transformed by the migration and settlement processes. It also helps to distinguish between the concepts of assimilation, acculturation and integration.

In summary, while this study is guided primarily by the social transformation approach and Berry's acculturation framework, exploring the "interaction of local-level factors immediately influencing people's migration decisions and strategies with a range of political, economic and social factors" (Collinson, 2009), I also take into consideration the theoretical perspectives of migration and settlement outlined above, as in order to understand academic mobility one has to have a good understanding of migration and settlement. Since this research is focused on understanding how academic mobility intersects with higher education and what the impact of academic mobility on higher education staff, it should optimally consider not only migrants' migration motivations, and the professional, financial and demographic benefits of migration (neoclassical theories, including pull and push theory), but also such pre-existing and current factors as culture, lifestyle, environment, and feeling of security, connectedness and social inclusiveness (Berry's theory of acculturation, migration network and migration systems theories, and social transformation approach).

## **Chapter 3. Study context**

### **3.1. Introduction**

Before entering into a discussion of academic migration relating to my study population, it is necessary to provide a brief definition of the terms used in this thesis. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR, also known as the Soviet Union) was founded in 1922. In its latest configuration it consisted of fifteen Soviet subnational republics, each of which had its own subnational government and capital; however, the capital of the USSR (and the republic of Russia) was in Moscow. The Soviet Union was the largest country in the world in terms of land mass (this status now belongs to Russia). Russia has always been the leading constituent of the Soviet Union not only due to its size, but also because over half of the total USSR population lived in Russia (DaVanzo & Grammich, 2001).

According to the 1989 USSR Census, out of the 286,7 million people living in the USSR in 1989, 51.4% resided in Russian Federation, 18.0% in Ukraine, 6.9% resided in Uzbekistan, 5.7% were in Kazakhstan, 3.5% in Belarus, and the rest 14.5% of the USSR population was spread mostly proportionally between other ten USSR republics (Goscomstat, 1989; Anderson & Silver, 1990; Schwartz, 1991). While for the confidentiality issues participants' nationality cannot be disclosed, it should be noted that their distribution as per being born and raised in a particular ex-USSR republic closely matches the demographics of the USSR before the 1991 breakup of the USSR, presented in the Figure 3.1. below.

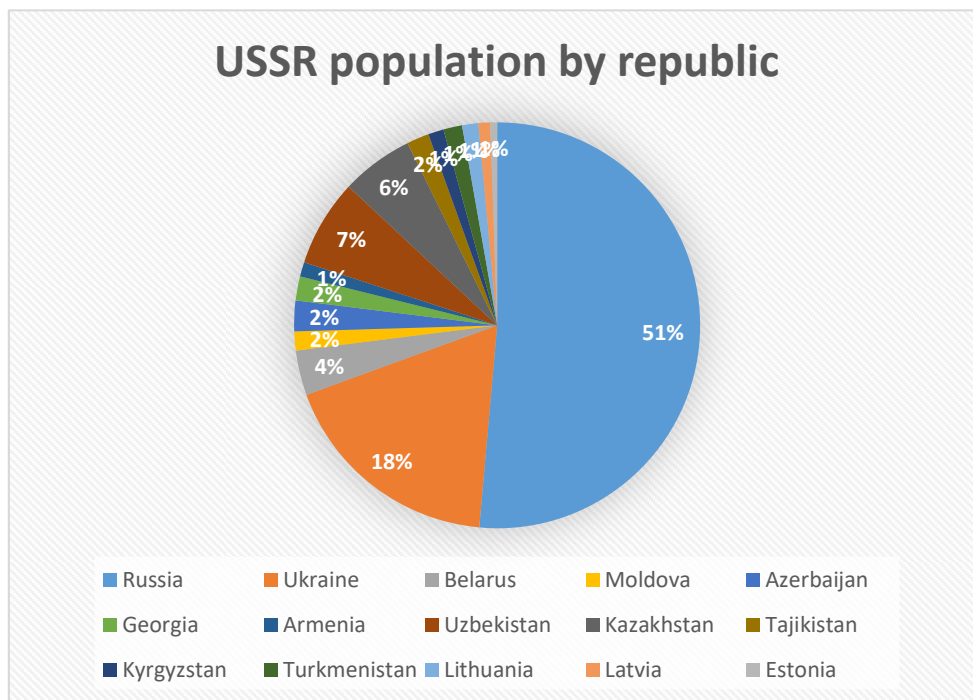


Fig. 3.1. USSR population by republic population (Goscomstat, 1989)

Not surprisingly, Russian language was the national language and also the language of communication between the people of this ethnically diverse country, with more than 200 distinct ethnic groups (CIA, 2013; Pavlenko, 2006). After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, all 15 Soviet republics became independent countries: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. I refer to these former countries of the Soviet Union as “post-Soviet” or “ex-USSR” countries. I use the terms “post-Soviet”, “former Soviet Union” and “ex-USSR” interchangeably to refer to the states that had previously been unified under the USSR (also referred to as the “Soviet Union”). Study participants reported themselves being from the different republics of the USSR; however, for the anonymity reasons it was not feasible to disclose the exact republics that the participants were born in and resided permanently. Most participants grew up and were educated under the Soviet regime. Those few, who completed their university education after 1991, did, in reality, study according to the

ex-USSR curriculum (Azimbayeva, 2017; Johnson, 2008; Silova, 2010). After graduation from university, all participants pursued an academic career and worked in the USSR or ex-USSR academy. I refer to them as “ex-USSR” academics because they all come from countries that had previously been part of the USSR and all had been influenced by the prevailing culture and education system imposed by the USSR government. On some occasions study participants are also referred to as “academic migrants”. The term “migrant” is often associated in the literature with low-skilled individuals who are forced to move due to economic and/or political reasons, especially in Europe (De Genova, 2002; Ruhs & Anderson, 2010; Matthews, 2019); however, this term is also often used in the scholarly literature to mean any individual who has moved temporarily or permanently to live in another country (Bauböck, 2003; Vertovec, 2004; Feller, 2005). In addition, the terms “immigrant” and “migrant” are sometimes used interchangeably by scholars (Portes, 2006; Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995) and the term “migrant” is the preferred term for the Australian government publications regarding migration (DHA, 2018c; ABS, 2018). In this study I will use the term “migrant” as to the dictionary meaning: 1. someone who migrates. 2. an immigrant, especially a recent immigrant (Macquarie Dictionary, 2018).

The history of migration in Australia traces changing social policies and attitudes and here I present these in brief along with a broad overview of the skilled migration programs and stages of multiculturalism in Australia that are relevant to this study’s focus. This chapter also provides a summary of the historical and current migration from the ex-USSR countries to Australia and describes the population group under study. In particular, Section 3.2. provides an overview of Australian migration and current migration policies with a focus on skilled migration. Sub-section 3.2.3.

addresses the government policy on migrant settlement and public discourse about multiculturalism in Australia: the term “multiculturalism” is defined, its development over the last fifty years in Australia and some current issues are briefly described. Section 3.3 describes the specific population that is the focus of this study, provides an overview of the history of migration to Australia from the territories occupied by the USSR; it also defines the specific background of this group in South Australian higher education and explains why this group is worth studying. This chapter then provides a brief review of the education system of the USSR and points out its differences in comparison to the Australian system of higher education.

## **3.2. Australian migration**

### ***3.2.1. Historical overview of migration to Australia***

Britain colonised Australia in January 1788 and transported many soldiers, sailors, scientists, engineers, workers and farmers to populate the continent, to plan and explore the “Great South Land”, to build first colonies and to supervise British convicts (Jupp, 2001). During the next hundred years six self-governing British colonies were established in Australia under the banner “one people, one destiny” (Mence, Gangell, & Tebb, 2015, p. 10). When in 1901 the British colonies became a Federation and formed the Commonwealth of Australia, the new nation was considered to be 78% “British” (AEC, 2011). One of the first pieces of legislation passed by the new Australian parliament was the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, which gave rise to the White Australia policy. According to this policy, migrants from non-English speaking or non-European countries were actively discouraged from migration to Australia (Jupp, 2001). So, a mechanism of “pick and choose” was established from the very beginning of immigration to Australia (Jupp & Kabala, 1993).



The period between World War I and World War II brought considerable numbers of immigrants to Australia (Mence et al., 2015) and by 1939 the Australian population had reached 7 million (ABS, 2006). In 1945 the Department of Immigration was formally established with the aim of regulating and legislating immigration; the policy of “populate or perish” was introduced to boost the population of Australia, so the country was able to protect itself, as well as develop and sustain its agriculture and industry (York, 2003). Until the 1970s, unrestricted migration of British citizens was assisted by different migration schemes. A government review of migration policy in 1966 recommended a focus on “an applicant’s suitability to settle, their ability to integrate and their professional qualifications, regardless of their race or nationality” (DIMA, 2001, p. 7). Following this policy, the migrant selection system (Numerical Multifactor Assessment System) was introduced in 1979 to assess the likelihood of migrants’ successful settlement in Australia (DIMA, 2001, p10). This set of requirements was used to assess whether the prospective migrants had an occupation that was in demand in Australia and adequate English language skills (DIMA, 2001, p.10). From 1979 and up to today, a revised and improved migration selection system is still in effect to hand-pick professionals to move to Australia to work via a number of temporary or permanent skilled or business visa pathways.

### ***3.2.2. Recent and current skilled migration policies in Australia***

Migration is of paramount importance to the interests of Australia as it is closely tied to economic growth (Phillips & Spinks, 2012). The purpose of the present migration program is to contribute to the development of the Australian economy by supporting the labour market and shaping Australian society and reuniting families (Phillips & Spinks, 2012). Indeed, for the last sixty years about one million migrants have arrived

in Australia each decade (DHA, 2018). As a result, Australia has become one of the largest migrant populations in the world: 25% of its residents were born overseas, with 92% of the population holding European ancestry and about 7% having Asian ancestry (Berry et al., 2006). Fig. 3.2 provides a summary of all types of migration intake (long-term and permanent arrivals and temporary students and visitors) since 1971. While it demonstrates there is a general overall increase in the number of migrants for the last forty years, it also shows there are a few fluctuations of intake, which mostly depend on the changes of migration legislation and policies, as well as various financial, political and social factors.

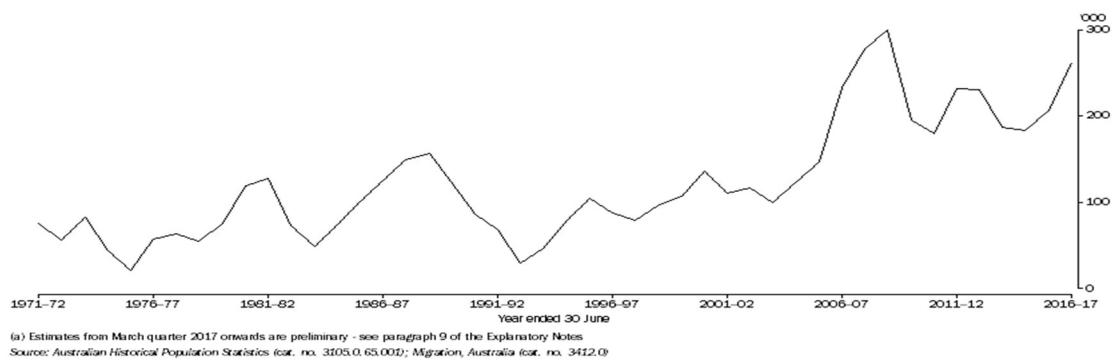


Fig.3.2. Net Overseas Migration (NOM) in Australia for the period 1971-72 – 2016-17 (ABS, 2018)

The current study is focused on skilled migration during the period 1991-2015, when the overall annual number of migrants expanded from about 40,000 in 1991 to over 180,000 by 2016 (Fig.3.2). Skilled migration constituted over 60% of the total migrant intake in the period under study (J. Phillips & Simon-Davies, 2016). In the last twenty years skilled migration has become a priority, though it has not always been the case (Fig.3.3). Over the last 10 years, migration has contributed more to population growth than has occurred through natural increases (CEDA, 2016). To manage skilled migration, Australian migration policies had to redefine its “select for success” criteria

introduced 50 years earlier (Hawthorne, 2005); now professionals are selected according to strict rules about the applicants' age, qualifications, work experience and level of English (DIAC, 2011). There are no welfare benefits provided to the skilled migrants for the first 2 years; hence, it is not surprising that shortly after arrival professionals often down-skill to obtain an income, rather than take time to adjust or update their overseas skills and/or qualifications to find employment in their professional field. Demand for Australian skilled visas exceeds the number of places available every year, so the following visa processing regulating mechanisms and instruments are in place: annual planning levels, skills in demand lists, cap and queue mechanisms, cap and cease provisions, and other legislative tools.

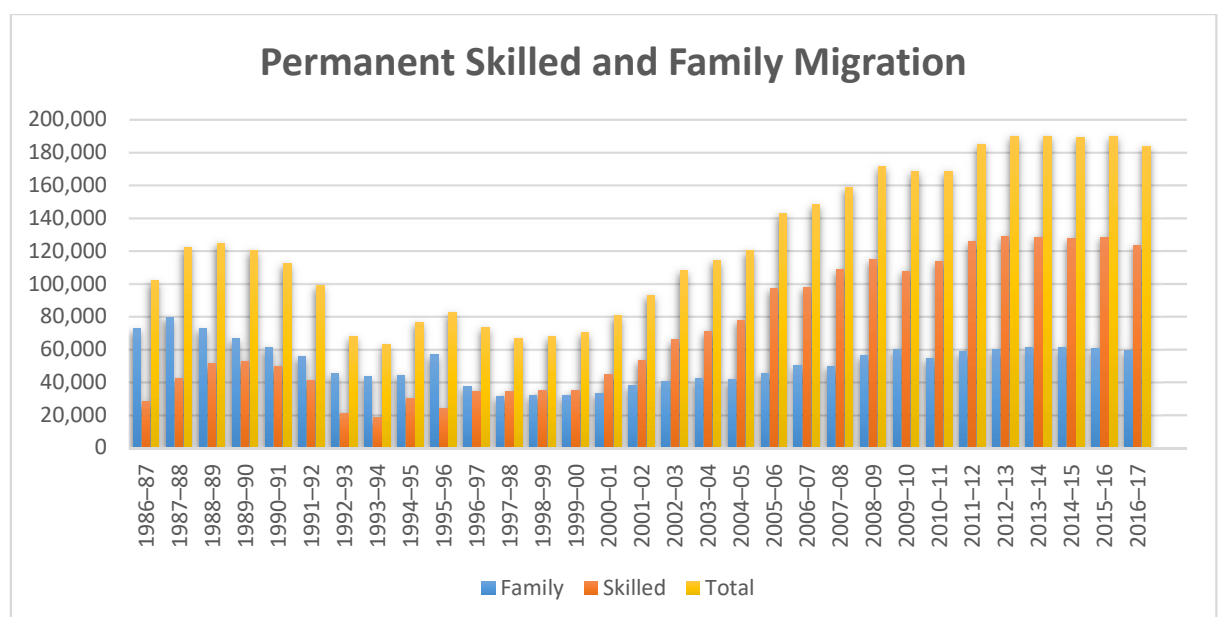


Fig. 3.3. Number of granted permanent skilled and family migration visas per financial year in Australia for the period 1987-2017.

The migration program of 2015-2016 was the largest ever accepted into Australia; 68% of the total number of people who migrated to Australia during the 2015-2016 financial year were skilled migrants (DIBP, 2016). The program was so successful that the intakes for the following years, including 2018, were kept unchanged (though

there is discussion about whether these numbers are maximising the effectiveness of the program and are sustainable in future) (DHA, 2018a).

In summary, Migration Regulations can be difficult to meet and are constantly changing. For instance, changes introduced on 18 March 2018 confirmed that Australia is following the current global trend for circular migration by discouraging permanent migration and providing incentives for temporary study and work pathways (DHA, 2018).

Furthermore, Australian states and territories proactively encourage professionals to move to the regional and less densely populated areas of Australia. For instance, the South Australian government (via Immigration SA) works with the Department of Immigration to attract eligible skilled and business migrants to South Australia through state-nominated visa programs. Immigration SA provides up-to-date information about the state support and nomination and carries out promotional activities in Australia and abroad to spark skilled migrants' interest in living and working in South Australia. The migration program of the state is determined at the federal level; however, the particular needs of the state are defined by the state government and are specified in the State Migration Plan (DPC, 2004, 2011) and Strategic Plan 2016-2018 (DPC, 2016). South Australia takes part in the migration programs available to State and Territories governments to assist with immigration and settlement into their jurisdiction. State level policies and strategies for employing professionally skilled staff from overseas are encouraging academics from all over the world to come to work and live here. South Australia is advertised as an affordable and family-friendly location, where traditions of education excellence are upheld and where migrants can enjoy a safe lifestyle balancing work and study (DSS, 2017). Chapter 5 will demonstrate the impact of the

South Australia migration policies on the academics' decision to migrate to and settle in South Australia. Data presented in Chapter 6 will further illustrate the benefits of the state migration support for skilled migrants.

### ***3.2.3. Australian multiculturalism***

The policy of multiculturalism in Australia has been important for facilitating the academic mobility of migrants from the ex-USSR. Multiculturalism is directly linked to the issues of migrant settlement and welfare as discussed in Chapter 2.

Multiculturalism as a concept and a policy framework was introduced in Australia in the 1970s (Jupp, 2007). The period until the 1970s is known as the period of the “White Australia Policy”, when colonialism and institutional racism dominated the Australian cultural landscape (Babacan & Babacan, 2007). Thus, before the 1970s it was mostly “white and Christian” Europeans, preferably of British decent, who were allowed to settle in Australia permanently. However, thousands of Chinese and Pacific Islanders had arrived in Australia during the gold rush period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; many arrivals from Britain were of Indian descent; and a number of non-Christian migrants came from Turkey and Lebanon (Jupp, 2001, 2004; Mence et al., 2015). Nevertheless, it was not until the mass immigration of many different nationalities during the post-World War II period that it became possible for non-British migrants to establish churches, community and welfare associations, ethnic schools, sport clubs and even food stores, thus preserving their identities and some aspects of their original culture. Despite widely spread beliefs that non-British immigration would threaten identity and social cohesion in Australia (Castles, 1992), a generation of mostly Labor leaders moved Australia towards cultural pluralism (Tavan, 2005; Zubrzycki, 1995, 2000). For example, in 1972 the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, promised to “remove

methodically from Australia's laws and practices all racially discriminatory provisions ... that seek to differentiate peoples on the basis of their skin" (Whitlam, 1972, quoted in Meyers, 2004). This statement was further reinforced by Al Grassby, the Minister for Immigration at the time, who said: "[The White Australia Policy] is dead, give me a shovel and I will bury it" (Grassby, 1973, quoted in Hocking, 2014).

Following the abandonment of the White Australia Policy, Australia adopted multiculturalism as a policy to deal with the diversity of its migrant population. Currently multiculturalism is defined as:

*the public acceptance of immigrants and minority communities as distinct communities, which are distinguishable from the majority population with regard to their language, culture and social behaviour and which have their own associations and social infrastructure. (Jupp, 2001, p. 807)*

In the several decades following the adoption of multiculturalism, Australia has developed from a migrant country to a multicultural nation that shares "a whole gamut of cultural values, is not mono-ethnic or monocultural, and does not harbour beliefs about descent from a common ancestry – either biological or cultural" (Smolicz, 1997, p. 181).

The policy of Australian multiculturalism was developed in three phases. The first stage started in 1970, when the framework of cultural pluralism was adopted as a basis of social democratic society (Babacan & Babacan, 2007). In accordance with this framework, Australian multicultural policies were no longer aimed at achieving assimilation and ethnic minorities were allowed to keep most of their linguistic, cultural and social characteristics. The main multicultural principles were adopted in

accordance with the Galbally (1978) report, including: equality of opportunity; right to maintain and express one's own culture; right to use ethno-specific services and rights of access to services available to the whole population; and that all the services were to encourage migrants to become self-reliant in a timely manner (Galbally, 1978; Jayasuriya, Walker, & Gothard, 2003). A report by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (Zubrzycki, 1982b) stated that the Australian multicultural framework was seen as a model to be worked towards—a vision for the future (Zubrzycki, 1982a). It was explained further that ethnic cultural groups were no more seen as exceptional, but were an accepted feature of the society, given they participated in and were committed to the Australian lifestyle (Zubrzycki, 1982b). It was also emphasised that multiculturalism was not a mechanism for the majority group to provide assistance for minority cultural groups, but was seen as a framework for developing relationships between all ethnic groups; including people with British ancestry who live in Australia (Zubrzycki, 1982a).

The second phase of multiculturalism occurred in the 1980s, when the Commonwealth Government decided to move away from a vague equality of opportunity policy towards equality in treatment and fairness (Babacan & Babacan, 2007). In 1988 the National Agenda for Multicultural Australia policy was launched, which supported the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion. This policy underlined the necessity to maintain, develop and use effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of their background (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989). Hence, an attempt to recreate Anglo-Celtic society in Australia had failed and it was evident that “the Australian nation cannot be squeezed back into the Anglo-Celtic box, which it outgrew long ago

and which, from an Aboriginal perspective, was a misfit from the start” (Smolicz, 1997). Australian multicultural policies of that period encouraged different ethnic groups to respect their national identity and at the same time to learn to live together and eventually form a sense of an Australian identity.

The third and current phase of Australian multiculturalism was introduced by the Howard Government in the 1990s. The FitzGerald (1988) report on multiculturalism was published to define future directions of the Australian immigration policy at the time. This report referred to multiculturalism as the specific governmental service that was provided to immigrants and ethnic communities. The report also revealed a widespread antagonism to multiculturalism, weakening public support for immigration and thus called for the development of a new Australian immigration policy (Galligan & Roberts, 2003). Since then a debate on the concept of multiculturalism, its value and the related terminology has arisen; consequently, the concept of multiculturalism was reported to be “confusing and aimless” (Howard quoted in Ludwig, 2005), while the term multiculturalism was written off as “a clumsy and pompous word” (Zubrzycki, 1995). Since the 1990s, in the media, television, political debate and scholarly publications the term multiculturalism has been variously substituted by terms such as cultural diversity, cultural pluralism, multi-ethnic balance, acceptance and tolerance of different lifestyles and cultures and/or engaging with linguistically and culturally diverse communities.

In 1999 (updated in 2003) the Australian government published a new multicultural policy statement, *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity* (DIMIA, 2003). This policy had reframed multiculturalism in negative terms by giving expression to ethnic communities being a “threat to the cultural integrity” of the Anglo-Celtic host society



(Dunn & Nelson, 2011). Indeed, the document stated that the international environment, and, particularly, different cultures, ethnicities and religions, was a challenge to Australia's community harmony. In order to regulate this, the government had initiated "a formal cooperative approach to establish more efficient and effective mechanisms for responding to community tension" (DIMIA, 2003). In addition, the 1999 multicultural policy called for tolerance towards various ethnic groups on the condition that people with Anglo-Celtic ancestry retained culture dominance, thus, in effect, re-introducing the principle of "whiteness" (Forrest & Dunn, 2013; Nelson & Dunn, 2017; Teo, 2003). This perceived incompatibility of different cultural groups and their inability to co-exist is referred to as a "new racism" in academic literature (Corlett, 2002; Dunn, Klocker, & Salabay, 2007; Dunn & Nelson, 2011; Forrest & Dunn, 2013; Nelson & Dunn, 2017; Vasta & Castles, 1996).

Currently, a new multicultural statement, *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* is in operation since March 2017; it was re-affirmed in March 2018 (DHA, 2018b). The benefits of the two-way integration have replaced the view that the cultural differences can enhance successful integration of migrants to the Australian community. The new mutual respect and obligation approach insists that not only migrants, but also members of the Australian community understand and support the view that only the existence of and adherence to the balance of rights and responsibilities will ensure Australian society is safe, stable, harmonious and resilient (DHA, 2018b). Furthermore, this document reiterates that modern Australia was founded through Anglo-Celtic settlement and that Australian modern parliamentary democracy, laws and institutions follow the Westminster system. Moreover, this multicultural statement underlines the centrality of English language as a critical tool

for the integration into the Australian community. Nevertheless, it links diversity to national security (DHA, 2018b). Hence, the focus of the current multiculturalism policy is not on ethnic differences, but on shared values of democracy, law, freedom, equal opportunities, and the development of the national identity, which should unite all multicultural residents of Australia. This demonstrates the shifting of the government focus from ideas of multiculturalism and cultural diversity back to the ideas of assimilation and integration (Koleth, 2010), which have been discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

In summary, Australian migration is an ongoing nation-building project that is being carried out according to the strict migration rules set by the government. It is often assumed that, despite the White Policy and racist past, Australia has been transformed into a well-functioning, ethnically diverse society with the shared ideals of migrants' social worth, a culture of self-expression, a principle of a "fair go" and a relaxed Australian lifestyle. However, some scholars believe that new racism is becoming institutionalised in society despite Australian multicultural policies (Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004; Dunn & Nelson, 2011; Jayasuriya, 2002; Vasta & Castles, 1996; Zevallos, 2006). It is therefore concluded that multiculturalism has not entirely prospered in Australia and is not able to completely overcome racism and prejudice in regards to immigrants, their race and nationality. Hence, it is not surprising that the relevancy of multiculturalism to the broader Australian community and, in particular, to the migrants remains the subject of ongoing debate.

Against the background of this politicised rhetoric, every year hundreds of thousands migrants arrive in Australia from many countries of the world. During their first years of settlement many migrants experience acculturation challenges, finding that the

balance between their attitudes and Australian values may cause them to develop multiple identities. They also can still experience racism, xenophobia and discrimination, which in the Australian media is traditionally associated with refugee, Indigenous and migrant communities (CERD, 2017). The focus of this study is on the migration and settlement experiences of international academics, thus, the study does not particularly focus on the social inequality issues. It is acknowledged that the diversity of the Australian population is still a complex problem that requires further exploration. Chapters 5 to 10 demonstrate that being from a culturally and linguistically diverse community in Australia is likely to add to the challenges of migration, settlement, and fitting into the new university workplace.

### **3.3. Migration from USSR countries to Australia**

#### ***3.3.1. Historical overview: migration to Australia from the territories of USSR/ex-USSR countries***

Immigration from the USSR and ex-USSR countries to Australia has a long history. The relationship between Russian Empire (which governed the territories of the most of the ex-USSR countries and beyond) and Australia started to develop in the early nineteenth century, when 17 naval ships sailed to Australia during the period 1807-1835 for exploratory visits; however, the first immigration wave to Australia from Russian Empire is often dated at 1880-1905 (Poole & McNair, 1992). This wave was mainly a result of the anti-Semitic riots in Russian Empire and acts of violence after the assassination in 1881 of the Russian Tsar Alexander II. Initially, immigrants from Russian Empire were mainly from the political and cultural elite; however, there were also sailors jumping ship to remain on Australian soil (Govor, 2005). The second wave of immigration from the Russian Empire was triggered by a series of military and political events in quick succession (Riasanovsky & Steinberg, 2010): the defeat of the

empire in the war with Japan in 1905, the 1905 revolution in Latvia, the first Russian revolution of 1905, followed by the February revolution of 1917; the First World War 1914-1918 and the following civil wars in Russia, Ukraine and Baltic countries; the execution of the former Russian Tsar and his family in 1918; the forming of the several Socialist Republics instead of the Russian Empire and the creation of the USSR in 1922. So, between 1905 and 1927 a number of highly educated academics, teachers and students in opposition to the ruling regime of Russian Empire and its successor – the USSR – migrated overseas, including to Australia; however, by 1928 the Soviet government had virtually put an end to any migration from the USSR (Felshtinsky, 1982).

The next immigration wave from the USSR occurred after the Second World War (1939–1945) and lasted until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. From 1947 to 1954 some Soviet migrants were accepted into Australia from displaced persons' camps in Europe and China under the International Refugee Organisations agreement and other re-settlement programs (Jupp, 2001). Immigration directly from the USSR was almost eliminated due to the tight control of the USSR population by the authorities. A decision to emigrate was described by the USSR press as highly unnatural and similar to "burying someone alive"; in fact, those wishing to leave the USSR were to be convicted and imprisoned as treasonous (Dowty, 1988; Zubok, 2009). The authorities would also make sure that the family members of those who were actually planning to *leave the USSR would be discredited, were unable to work, and quite possibly, humiliated publicly* (Felshtinsky, 1982; Yurchak, 2013). *In addition, migrants' close friends and relatives were forced to denounce the traitors and pledge loyalty to the USSR and socialist values* (Yurchak, 2013).

The current immigration wave commenced in 1991 when the USSR was dissolved into fifteen independent countries. So, since the mid-90s the percentage of ex-USSR migrants in Australia has started to grow. The majority of the arrivals to Australia from the ex-USSR countries after 1991 were young well-educated professionals with good knowledge of English (Origins, n.d.). The Australian Census 2016 (ABS, 2018) invited respondents to nominate one or two ancestries to which they most closely identify. In defining person's ancestry, the Census guide recommended respondents should consider the origins of their parents and grandparents. Thus, I was able to track down data for the people of either of USSR ancestry or of the ex-USSR republic ancestry. According to the 2016 data, 0.83% of the Australian population claims USSR ancestry, and in South Australia 1.01% of the Australian population claims USSR ancestry. Although the numbers are small, it is evident that a larger proportion of migrants from the ex-USSR resides in South Australia. More than that, as demonstrated in Section 3.3.2 below, academics from the ex-USSR are overrepresented in South Australian higher education; this group is the target population of this study.

In summary, various waves of USSR migration to Australia have set up strong expatriate communities in Australia. It is likely that many ex-USSR Australian residents still use Russian language as the means of communication at home and maintain some connections to their home country. I will explore the theme of connection to home in more detail in Chapters 10 and 11. In the meantime, the next section uses the 2016 Census of Population and Housing (2016 Census) to describe the demographic data of my target population.

### ***3.3.2. Migration of USSR/ex-USSR academics to South Australia***

This section presents the analysis of the publicly accessible statistical data and information about this study's population group that is available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This section also describes the USSR system of higher education and research and indicates differences between the USSR and Australian systems of higher education. This contextual information is necessary to understand the participants' expectations of the Australian academic workplace and their education background that they bring to Australian higher education.

#### **3.3.2.1. Ex-USSR migrants in South Australia**

Statistical data from 2016 Census (ABS, 2018) is used to understand more about the study target population (academic migrants from the USSR and post-Soviet countries) and to see if their characteristics are different from the national and state average. This section presents the demographic characteristics, including the size, education and occupation, summarized in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 and Figure 3.4 below and discussed in Section 3.3.2.2 in more detail.

The population born in the USSR or ex-USSR countries and currently living in Australia numbers over 51,000, which is approximately 0.21% of the national population (ABS, 2018). However, the 2016 Census data reveals that there are four times as many people with ex-USSR ancestry, bringing this up to 0.84% of the total population in Australia and 0.83% of the total migrant population of Australia (ABS, 2018). The state level 2016 Census data indicates that there are 3,883 people currently residing in South Australia who were either born in the USSR or the countries of the ex-USSR; this is 1.01% of the migrant population of the state (ANMS, 2018). The proportion of

native-born people with USSR ancestry is very slightly higher in South Australia than in Australia overall (1.01% vs 0.83% respectively).

Table 3.1. Total population / Overseas- and USSR-born population / USSR ancestry

	<b>Australia (AU)</b>	<b>South Australia (SA)</b>
Population total	23,401,891	1,676,653 (7.16% of total AU population)
Overseas born (all)	6,163,667 (28.3% of total AU population)	384,096 (22.9% of total SA population)
(Ex-)USSR born migrants	51,122 (0.21% of total AU population)	3,883 (0.23% of total SA population)
Proportion of USSR migrants among all migrants	0.83%	1.01%
USSR ancestry	195,898 (0.84% of total AU population)	16,857 (1.01% of total SA population)

Data Source: 2016 Census of Population and Housing (ABS, 2018)

The language spoken at home is one indication of the degree to which a particular group retains connections to their language and culture. The 1979 USSR Census indicated that Russian was the native language of the 137 million ethnic Russians of the Soviet Union republics and the first language of choice for over 153 million USSR residents (Corbett & Comrie, 2003). Since 1905, Russian was the only language used for secular primary, secondary and higher education in the Russian Empire (Belikov & Krysin, 2001) and continued for over 70 years of the Soviet era. According to the 2016 Census, about 49% of those born in the USSR speak Russian at home in South Australia, compared to about 55% of those in Australia overall (ABS, 2018). Russian is one of the most common languages of communication at home for the ex-USSR migrants in Australia and the USSR migrants are likely to be bilingual and bicultural. The theory of biculturalism was discussed in Chapter 2 and the practical aspects of

being bicultural or multicultural will be further examined in the chapters dedicated to teaching, supervision, and research and collaboration.

### **3.3.2.2. Ex-USSR migrants in South Australian higher education**

The 2016 Census provides data on education levels in the Australian population. This allows me to compare education levels of the total Australian population, the Australian-born, the overseas-born and the USSR-born population (see Fig. 3.4). In general, Australians are quite highly educated. OECD indicators of education quality demonstrate that, in 2016, 43.7% of the total Australian population had received a tertiary education. Similarly, over 45% of the USSR population had a bachelor degree, though this was concentrated in the European part of the country, with a lower percentage in the Asian republics (OECD, 2016, 2017; Prokof'ev, 1961). While it was not possible to source comparable figures for every ex-USSR country, recent publications demonstrate that European ex-USSR countries (Russia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine) still maintain their leading positions (OECD, 2016, 2017).

Fig. 3.4 below presents data on the education levels of adults in accordance to the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF). According to the AQF, tertiary education comprises technical and further education, vocational education, higher education, and postgraduate education. However, to become an academic a person usually needs to have a postgraduate degree in their field; thus, the population group that is the target of this research is mostly represented by the PhD and Master Degree holders.

On average, about 5.4% of the total population in Australia holds a postgraduate degree; however, when we compare the subgroups of population we find stark differences. Only 3.5% of native-born Australians hold a postgraduate degree, while about three times as many (9.5%) overseas-born Australians do. The proportion of



postgraduate degree holders is the highest among the USSR-born migrants (14.35%), or four times the percentage of native-born Australians. The state figures are slightly lower than the national averages, but still are consistent with the general trend of overseas migrants, especially those from the USSR, being more highly educated than the average for the total Australian and Australian-born population, as presented in the Fig. 3.4 below.

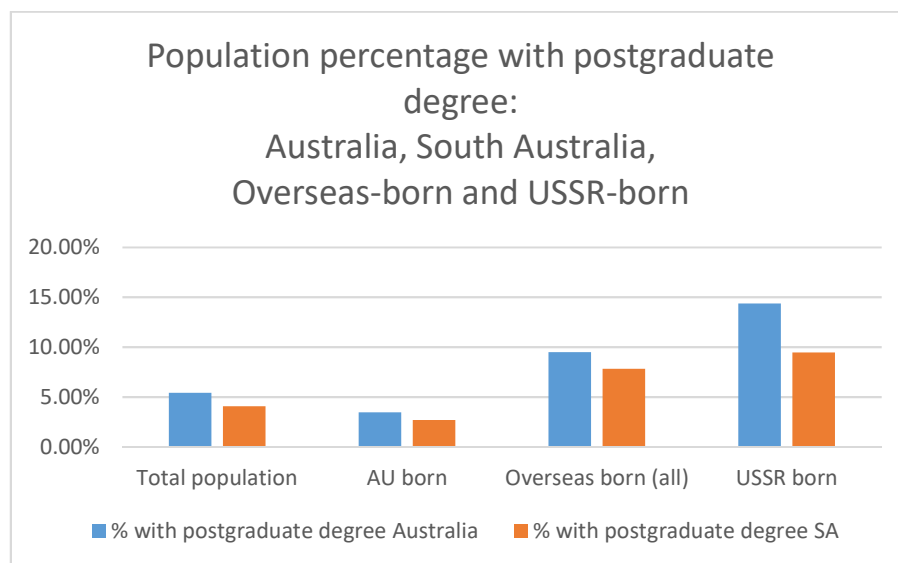


Fig. 3.4. Population percentage with postgraduate degree (ABS, 2018).

To lecture and research at a university it is usual to have a PhD ([Skills.sa.gov.au](http://Skills.sa.gov.au)), although there are still some academics without this degree, for example, those who started in the 1970s when they didn't need a doctorate (Cervini, 2014) or have been appointed because of their industry experience in some specific areas of business and healthcare. Table 3.2 presents the 2016 Census demographic data on the size of the academic population. According to the 2016 Census, there are about 50,000 university lecturers in Australia, and about 3,500 of them work in South Australia (ABS 2018). There are 297 lecturers of USSR origin, who represent just 0.60% of the national population of academics. In comparison, the number of South Australian ex-USSR-

origin lecturers is 29, constituting 0.84% of the South Australian university lecturers, which is slightly higher than the national figure.

Table 3.2 University lecturers (general population versus USSR-born) in Australia and South Australia

	<b>Australia (AU) 2016</b>	<b>South Australia (SA)</b>
Number of university lecturers	49,227	3,434
Number of university lecturers born in USSR	297 (0.60% of total AU lecturers)	29 (0.84% of total SA lecturers)

Data Source: 2016 Census of Population and Housing (ABS, 2018)

Therefore, we can see that the migrant population born in the USSR or in the countries of the ex-USSR is not very large in South Australia; however, they stand out among other migrant populations and the native-born population as having higher levels of education on average. This makes South Australia a good place to conduct this case study. While having a significant intellectual potential might be useful in many different ways, some literature in this area indicates that “unlike qualifications for the general population, education for migrants does not generate similar employment and income gains” (Migration in Focus, Migration Council Australia, 2015, p.9). Chapter 5 will investigate if an income gain was the main motivation to migrate to South Australia for study participants, and will touch upon other motivation factors, while Chapter 7 will explore study participants’ academic career trajectory after their migration to South Australia. Overall, academic migrants from the ex-USSR have been overlooked and under-researched in the literature; this study is designed to explore how migration has affected the academic careers and professional practices of this portion of the Australian population.

### **3.3.2.3. Educational background of ex-USSR academics**

The educational background of ex-USSR academics is defined not only by the education system under which they spent their formative years, but also by the social, economic and political environment in their country at the time. The aim of higher education in the USSR was to satisfy the needs of the centrally planned economy, so that universities were to prepare graduates to work in specific occupations (Webber, 1999). However, an important feature of the Soviet education system was the blend of communist propaganda with teaching: most facts and information had to be interpreted through the ideological filter set by the Communist party, with the aim of moulding peoples' thinking in the "correct" way (Heyneman, 2010; Heyneman & De Young, 2006). Combined with the increased politicization of the education system and society as a whole, propaganda influenced policies and practices of the universities in various ways.

Every participant in the current study had lived in the USSR and thus was exposed to the Soviet education system, ideology and propaganda, rather than to the post-Soviet education system and its ideology (Heyneman, 2010; Heyneman & De Young, 2006; Karpov & Lisovskaya, 2004; Smolentseva, 2012). Furthermore, the USSR legacy in the education sphere was further exacerbated during the post-Soviet period, as until early 2000s many higher education institutions of the ex-USSR countries continued using the USSR policies, procedures, curricula and textbooks (A. Cox, 2011; Eklof, Holmes, & Kaplan, 2004; Gordin, Graham, & Dezhina, 2009; Heyneman, 2010).

The higher education system of the USSR consisted of the Bachelor degree and a two-tier Doctoral degree. In the USSR a Bachelor degree traditionally required completing a course of five or six full-time years of study at university. One could enter a university

straight from high school, having satisfied the entrance requirements in several subjects, depending on the future discipline area. The degree of Master did not exist under the USSR education system; however, after completing a Bachelor program with Honours, graduates became eligible to attempt entry exams to enter a further postgraduate degree: a PhD by research or publication (Balzer, 1994; A. Jones, 1994, 2016). A PhD candidate would then be assigned to one of the Academy of Sciences research institutes or universities or a specific military or industry technical university to do the research. Quite often a candidate would carry out his or her research on the topic that is specified by some industry body and approved by the academic program management. The USSR (and still in most post-Soviet countries) had a two-tier doctoral degree system. On graduating from a doctoral program, a candidate would be awarded a degree of “Candidate of Sciences” in the specific discipline (Kandidat Nauk), while the degree of a Doctor would be awarded years later, depending on the level of the academic’s standing, exceptional quality and quantity of publications and the degree of contribution to the field (Russian Legislation (n.d.). The “Candidate of Sciences” from the USSR and most post-Soviet countries satisfies the criteria for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) set in most countries (UNESCO, 2011; Zajda & King, 2014).

Historically, generic higher education, specialised industry higher education, and research in the USSR were often separated, which created problems with curriculum relevancy and funding. Despite the fact that education institutions were very hierarchical and strictly regulated, the curriculum frequently existed separately from the actual course content, which was often dictated by the related industry bodies (Burkhalter & Shegebayev, 2012). Indeed, technical, polytechnic or medical academies and universities were mostly affiliated with relevant industry ministries and specific

enterprises that were de-facto owners of those universities. Despite this, most of the higher education institutions were subordinated to the Ministry of Education of the USSR and were further controlled by the Ministry of Education of the relevant USSR republic; both authorities were in charge of funding allocation (Savelyev, Zuyev, & Galagan, 1990). This complicated arrangement led to discrepancies between actual degree program and the curriculum and also to the disproportional funding of some scientific-technical disciplines (Bereday & Pennar, 1976; Heyneman, 2010).

While some medical universities were often research and development oriented, technical higher education institutions rarely organised academic research projects. Their focus was on specific scientific and technical subjects and on getting their graduates ready for employment in military-related fields (Balzer, 1993). In contrast, specialised research institutions in the USSR did not have any specific teaching agenda, instead focusing only on research and development. These research institutes were subdivided into industry or government funded. Their aim was to attend to the priority directions of science development set by the Communist Party, and plan and coordinate research projects that apply the achievements of science to industry. Part of their role was to train academics in a number of areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, along with selected aspects of humanities and social sciences.

Despite significant ideological and authoritarian vetting of the academic studies and research practices and standards by the Communist Party and the post-Soviet governments, USSR and ex-USSR higher education and research achieved outcomes that are ranked highly by international standards. It is known that in many cases research outcomes equalled (and in some narrow disciplines excelled) that being

produced in Western countries. Indeed, some of the important scientific advances of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were made by the USSR scientists, particularly in such disciplines as mathematics, nuclear physics, chemistry, and astronomy (L. Graham, 1990; Grove, 1996). That has enabled many USSR academics to migrate to western countries and pursue their disciplines there with distinction. So, while the ideological bent of the Party may have affected practices of teaching and research in many areas (in Arts, in particular), it was more cosmetically grafted on in other areas, and didn't impinge on the theories and methods at the heart of many disciplines.

After the 1991 USSR collapse, higher education in most ex-USSR countries salvaged several characteristics of the USSR system: a high level of state control and bureaucracy, restrictions to academic freedom, lack of funding, limited access to information resources and modern technology, poor condition of infrastructure and out-of-date equipment, brain drain and corruption (Denisova-Schmidt & Leontyeva, 2013; Smolentseva, 2003). A number of reforms were introduced that initiated the process of change in the ex-USSR higher education institutions, for instance, decentralisation and introduction of private sector universities, tuition fees and standardised entry exams. Some ex-USSR countries joined the Bologna process in the 2000s, which pushed many universities to adjust their curricula, diversify their programs, establish international cooperation and introduce the concept of academic mobility (HERB, 2016). In parallel with these changes, a number of smaller universities and scientific research centres experienced major funding problems; many of them had to amalgamate to survive or were simply shut down; consequently, thousands of academics lost their jobs and had to survive working as traders or small business

owners (Konstantinovskiy, 2017). This situation created the incentives for academics to explore overseas academic and research opportunities.

The education systems of Australia and the USSR/ex-USSR are quite different. As stated above, the goal of Soviet higher education was not only to prepare a suitably qualified workforce, but also to shape the identity of the students in such a way that graduates were well-disciplined, uncritical, and supportive of Communist Party policies. To achieve that outcome, education from early childhood to postgraduate levels was tightly controlled by the authorities. It was designed to indoctrinate communist ideology, and was very hierarchical and rigid (Kuraev, 2016; Yates & Grumet, 2011). In contrast, the system of Western education was built on the fundamentals of liberalism and the ideals of the public good; as well, universities have mostly been self-governed. The university students in Australia have always been encouraged to think critically, ask questions, develop new skills and confidence to share their academic experiences and apply their knowledge (Song & McCarthy, 2018).

It is reasonable to conclude that academic migrants from the USSR/ex-USSR may experience a number of challenges as they begin working in an Australian university, as the education systems have different principles of organisation and purpose. For instance, on the one hand, it is expected that ex-USSR academics might be suspicious of management and overprotective of their research agendas and teaching approaches. On the other hand, ex-USSR academics might be more sympathetic to teacher-centred approaches to teaching, with tight control over curriculum content and student performance, and little flexibility or innovation in respect to engaging with different learning styles and pedagogies. These issues are explored in Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10. As briefly mentioned above, while this study's participants are from the

different ex-USSR countries, their Soviet upbringing, Soviet education and the exposure to Soviet propaganda since childhood are likely to homogenise the cultural differences and ethnic backgrounds of these academics. Investigating the challenges of the ex-USSR academic migrants in Australian higher education will contribute to an understanding about how an Australian university might support their internationally diverse academic staff during the adaptation period.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

I have demonstrated in this chapter the historical reliance of the Australian economy on skilled migration, which ex-USSR academics have contributed to. Indeed, the Australian economy is built on migration (Hawthorne, 2011) as a major source of its population and workforce growth (Shah & Burke, 2005). The supply of a multinational and multilingual skilled workforce through migration is necessary for Australia to continue having a competitive advantage in the globalised economy. Systems and policies have long been in place to manage migration and settlement issues. Australian settlement policies have changed several times since the 18<sup>th</sup> century: initially guided by the assimilation theory and White Australia policy, the approach shifted in favour of the multicultural approach in the 1970s, although this currently seems to be losing support in some quarters. While multiculturalism is still the official approach to migrant settlement and adaptation in Australia, there are ongoing debates in regard to the wider public's acceptance of some migrant communities' way of life, religion and culture. The concept of two-way integration into the Australian community is now being propagated in the Australian society, so that everyone is accountable for sustaining the balance of rights, responsibilities and freedoms to keep Australia safe, resilient and harmonious (DHA, 2018b). Besides the issues of public acceptance of



migrants, it has been established that skilled migrants often have a higher than average level of education than residents in Australia, as having a higher education degree increases the chances of their migration. However, when in Australia, their high level of education does not necessarily contribute to their prospects of successful settlement and professional employment (Migration Council Australia, 2015, ABS, 2014).

Against this background, this chapter summarises the history of migration from the territories of the USSR/ex-USSR countries to Australia, describes the main immigration waves and analyses the ABS data referring to the population group under study. The figures for the number of the ex-USSR migrants in Australia and in South Australia demonstrate that the size of this particular population group is relatively small, representing just about over 0.2% of the overall population. However, we also learn that they are better educated than the average resident in Australia and, more specifically, in comparison to the overseas born population, who are mostly skill-selected. Thus, despite the notion that the USSR government machine had thoroughly undermined the quality of learning and research across many disciplines, this group has a high potential to contribute to multiple scientific, education, and innovation projects.

Therefore, I conclude that academic migrants from the USSR/ex-USSR countries are worth studying as an identifiable group with significant intellectual potential; and who, given an opportunity, can effectively use their knowledge and skills in the Australian higher education system. While academic migrants from UK, China, Singapore and other nationalities in Australian higher education have been researched (Hugo, 2008b, 2010; Maadad, 2014; Potts, 2005, 2014; Saltmarsh & Swirski, 2010), academics from

the Soviet Union and post-Soviet space have hardly been looked at. Thus, the exploration of these academics' experiences relating to their migration and work in higher education institutions of South Australia will contribute to the understanding of the personal and work-related challenges of migration in general and to the scholarly field of academic mobility studies in particular.

## **Chapter 4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The methodology used in this thesis is underpinned by the social transformational approach (Castles, 2009, 2010; Castles et al., 2013; De Haas, 2010b), and uses Berry's acculturation framework (Berry, 2005) - both were discussed earlier in Chapter 3 - to explore peoples' experiences and understand socio-cultural aspects of migration and adaptation at the new workplace in the new country. This chapter outlines the philosophical assumptions that underlie the investigation and demonstrates that a case study is an appropriate qualitative research strategy for the aims of the study. Study data collection procedures, participant recruitment, and methods used to analyse the study data are also presented in this chapter. Additionally, outlined are the ethical considerations and the insider-researcher perspective. Explanation of the procedures to ensure study validity, reliability and generalisability concludes this chapter.

### **4.2. Epistemological and methodological approaches**

The paradigm assumed in this work is constructivism, as I see reality as subjective, flexible and different from person to person (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 2002). As people seek understanding of the world in which they live by interpreting and negotiating the meanings for actions, situations and experiences at the particular point in time and in the particular context, they create multiple subjective realities (Blaikie, 2007; Merriam, 2002). These realities, thus, are "constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). In addition, subjective and shared meanings and the realities constructed are flexible and "may change as their constructors become more informed and sophisticated" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.

111). The process of capturing, describing, and understanding of the multiple individual meanings of the lived experience of the participants creates knowledge, which is constructed through the dynamic interaction between the investigator and study participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). In an interpretive qualitative study the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002; Robson, 2011), thus, researcher's own experiences and subjectivity can influence data collection and interpretation (this issue is discussed in Section 4.3.2 below).

Qualitative research explores people's lives and lived experiences, behaviours, feelings and emotions, and it can also refer to organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena and international interactions (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research methods are applied in this study to explore the participants' perceptions of academic mobility, to understand which academics' migration to Australia and following it social and cultural adaptation at the university and in wider community is investigated. Exploring the opinions and observations of one professional population group that little is known about, I was not only able to provide in-depth detail about experiences of the ex-USSR academic migrants, but also to contribute to the scholarly research on international academic staff. Thus, the purpose of the study and the research questions match the use of qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

In summary, this research follows the interpretivism tradition and I believe that the choice of qualitative research methods that are used in this study is justified by the nature of the project, research questions, as well as the recognised and established academic research traditions and practices in the field of enquiry.

#### **4.2.1. Case study**

A case study is one of the most frequently used qualitative research methods (Yin, 2002, 2017; Thomas, 2011; Gomm, 2000), allowing a researcher to closely observe characteristics of a social group, a community or an individual in order to analyse the phenomena in relation to the object of the study in a real-life context (Merriam, 1998, 2009; Yin, 2011; Zainal, 2007). In particular, application of this qualitative approach is highly appropriate to the present research as the study aims to understand the meaning of people's lives under real-world conditions, to depict scribe people in their everyday roles, and to present the views and perspectives of the study participants (Yin, 2011).

A classic case study is constructed out of naturally occurring social situations and focus on investigating some unit, or set of units, in relation to which data are collected and/or analysed (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000). The standard accepted definition of 'case study' is "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a "real life" context." (Simons, 2009 p. 21). Defining the case study, scholars describe the boundaries that are traditionally set to prevent the "explosion" (Baxter & Jack, 2008) that comes about when questions are too broad to answer or topics are not able to be researched well in a single study. Thus, Creswell (1994, 2005) and Yin (2002) state that a case study is an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context, where the bounded system is constrained by time and place, and the case can be a phenomenon, a program, an institution or a social group. Stake (2008), following Smith (1978), asserts that the case study is an integrated

system that is bounded by time, activities and purpose of the study, while Miles and Huberman (1994) propose that the case study can be bound by definition and context. While the present work does conform to the classic definition of case study in general, it has some departures from it. Overall, the purpose of this inquiry is to investigate a phenomenon (academic mobility) through the reported lived experiences of the study participants (Australian academics) in the particular social context (higher education institution). However, this case study slightly departs from the classic case study as the group under investigation is loosely bound. On the one hand, the group under the study is closely bound by the place (Australia), by the organisation type (South Australian universities), by participants' occupation (university academic staff). On the other hand, while all of them were raised under the system of Soviet propaganda, and share the USSR history, education, cultural values and can speak Russian, they have moved to Australia at various times (over a period between 1991-2015) and under various migration circumstances from a range of ex-USSR countries. So, this case study is not particularly tightly bounded either temporally or geographically. However, following Miles & Huberman (1994) and Merriam (1998, 2009), it is argued that, if the phenomenon of interest is sufficiently well defined, and can be considered to be sufficiently 'fenced-in', then the inquiry can be properly considered to be a case study. Thus, I follow here Merriam's definition of qualitative case study research as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process or a social unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. xiii). Therefore, I consider that the experiences of academic mobility constitute a case even though it is not tightly bounded. Although the particular set of people I have targeted for this study does not conform to the classical

model of a single cultural geographic group, it is clear that recent case study research - see, for example, Millars' (2010) work on public storytelling, Akar, Fischer, & Namgung's (2013) inquiry into travel behaviour and patterns, and Malewski, Sharma & Phillion's (2012) treatment of preschool teachers' international work placement experiences - establishes a solid precedent for the use of this method to study this particular group of participants. (See also: Burgess, 2011; Cohen et al., 2002; Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 2009; 2011, 2017; Merriam, 1994, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Yazan, 2015).

My research focuses on the migration and academic behaviors of an identifiable group of people who have strong experiential communalities. The main aim of this research is to explore experiences of the study participants, rather than to develop a theory, thus, this case study employs what Yin (2009) describes as an exploratory approach. This case study investigates not only the experiences of academic migrants in specific social situations, but also people's understanding and interpretation of their experiences (Wilson & Chaddha, 2009; Creswell, 2002). Utilizing an exploratory approach this study provides an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of academic mobility and of the associated experiences, motivations and feelings of the participants, who, being raised and educated in the USSR, share the same broad historical background and culture, belong to one particular occupation group, and reside in one geographical location.

### **4.3. Data collection**

#### ***4.3.1. Data collection methods***

In conducting this case study I used a number of research tools and data sources. A large amount of data was collected in the process of formal semi-structured interviews

and informal preliminary and follow-up discussions with study participants. It has been noted that using multiple data sources enhances the credibility of the findings (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). Following this advice, a number of other sources were examined. In particular, I used information and publications from the websites of the Department of Education and Training, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Human Services, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Immigration South Australia, along with a number of migration policies and current migration legislation. I also regularly read blogs and online forums of Australia's ex-USSR community members; while this informs my background understanding of current issues in the Russian community, I do not use it as formal data set. The main source of the data for analysis is the individual interviews. The main tool for collecting data in this study is the "long" (McCracken, 1988) one-to-one semi-structured interview, which allows for richer and more personalised responses, rather than surveys, focus groups or structured interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Patton, 1980, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Conducting in-depth interviews meets the aims of the exploratory case study and minimises bias arising from the researcher's "intimate, repeated and prolonged involvement in the life and community of the respondent" (McCracken, 1988, p. 7). Using a long interview as a research tool provided me with the opportunity to capture rich data without violating study participants' privacy or exhausting their patience, as I was able to develop a rapport with the participants of the study and establish a relaxed, trustworthy, friendly and comfortable atmosphere.

The interview topics were informed by a preliminary literature search in the fields of migration and higher education; as well as my personal professional experience of academic and migration consultancy work. Based on the topics identified, a protocol



for a semi-structured interview was developed and a number of open-ended questions prepared; however, for some topics the exact questions were constructed only in the course of the interview. This provided flexibility and opportunities for adjusting the sequence of questions or adding follow-up questions, asking a participant to clarify, elaborate, sequence, or evidence some specific pieces of information they share. The interview protocol is attached in Appendix 2. The use of the interview protocol provided an opportunity to ensure that participants were covering most areas of interest to the study. I have been conscious of keeping to the minimum any assumptions or pre-defined outcomes before interviews were carried out and raw data were collected. However, being an insider-researcher (see 4.3.2) I could easily relate participants' experiences to my own, which on the one hand provided me with "a more detailed and systematic appreciation of the personal experience with the topic of interest" (McCracken, 1988, p. 32), and on the other hand allowed me to prompt the interviewees to compare particular situations or to discuss the meaning of some events in their life. This has also helped the participants to feel trusted, valued and being understood; hence, if there was a need to return for a follow up interview, an invitation for that would have been gladly accepted.

Interviews with the participants were conducted in a place that was safe for both participant and researcher; and in most cases it was agreed that the researcher's university office was the best option. Although interviews in the natural setting may enhance authenticity, my main concern was to ensure the interview meeting was scheduled in a private, neutral, and distraction-free location; in addition, the interviewee's comfort could increase the chance of getting high-quality information (Padgett, 2016). Thus, most of the study participants were invited to visit a quiet

University of Adelaide city office for an interview and a friendly talk, except those who preferred to be interviewed in the privacy of their own university offices or in a quiet meeting room at the university library on their campus. Two interviews were carried out on Skype, as the participants had accepted offers from interstate universities since being enrolled into this study. Thus, each interview was conducted in a one-to-one environment and every participant was invited to recount stories and share perceptions of their migration to South Australia and working for a higher education institution. Subject to the signed consent form each interview was audio-recorded.

Every interview was transcribed. Most of the interviews were transcribed in the language in which the interview was conducted. Due to the fact that most participants preferred to use Russian at the interview, either the whole interview or the relevant segments were then translated into English for the study. It was assumed that some study participants might be passionate about the possibility of others changing their words in the study reports and publications (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006); hence, after the interviews were transcribed and translated, transcripts and/or translations were sent to the interviewees for their feedback and checking. This confirmed there were no major errors in the data collected. As the result, the authenticity of the collected data was validated by the interviewees and no corrections were requested. Information attained from the interviews was anonymised, so that individual participants could not be identified in future, and measures were taken to keep the participants' confidentiality as specified in the ethical approval. Interviewees had an option of terminating their participation at any time. It is planned that after the research is completed, study participants would be debriefed by the researcher and online links to the thesis and publications would be provided (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003; Bryman, 2015).

Overall, the main tool for this qualitative case study is the semi-structured individual interview. The participants were encouraged to express their memories, recall experiences, challenges, and feelings in response to the open-ended questions asked, and every interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Using this research method, I was able to collect in-depth descriptions of the individual processes of academic migration. Participants appeared glad to be given an opportunity to recollect their migration and settlement experiences and discuss their experiences of fitting into the new university workplace, their challenges at work and everyday academic routine. The flexibility of the interview format allowed participants to talk about their personal issues and to describe not only facts and events of their academic career, but also the meanings of those experiences.

#### ***4.3.2. Insider-researcher***

To make this qualitative research more credible it is important to clarify the role of the researcher in this study (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). As stated earlier, I believe that I am an insider-researcher as I have chosen to study the group to which I belong (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Breen, 2007).

There are certain advantages and disadvantages to being an insider researcher. One of the benefits is that the researcher has been living and working in the community under investigation for a reasonable period of time, thus the group culture and background are considered to be the researcher's own. As the insider-researcher shares the culture and many of the cultural values with the study participants, he or she can understand their values and cultural norms better than an outsider. In addition, an insider-researcher does not run the risk of imposing their own cultural values through their questions or in data analysis (Chiro, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Smolicz &

Secombe, 1981). Another benefit of being an insider-researcher is in the ease of communication with the participants. In some instances, the study participants may be already known to the researcher and a relational intimacy with the group members might have already been developed (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). An insider researcher's familiarity with the culture being studied means they may have less risk of overlooking important nuances in the data. Thus, an insider researcher would be in the position not only to capture explicit dimensions of culture that are cognitively salient to members of that culture or subculture, but also to notice and interpret some tacit dimensions that may not be articulated by members of the culture or subculture, but nevertheless could be shared (Fetterman, 2010).

While there are several advantages of being an insider researcher, there are also a few drawbacks that potentially can influence the interpretation of the data and the credibility of the findings (Hammersley, 1993; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002; Kitchin and Tate, 2013; Rooney, 2005; Sikes & Potts, 2008). First, an outsider can, perhaps, be more objective when interpreting the data than an insider-researcher, who is a member of the community under investigation. Likewise, an outsider is unlikely to accept certain statements and reactions of the participants as unquestionable "truths" (Unluer, 2012). Indeed, the unconscious acceptance of the broad cultural norms and values that participants and researcher share make an insider-researcher susceptible to blind spots (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). For instance, being an insider, a researcher can "fail to notice pertinent questions or issues because of the inability to step back from a situation and fully assess the circumstances" (Kitchin and Tate, 2013, p. 29). Therefore, a researcher can instinctively make wrong assumptions or be blindsided, as some issues might not seem sufficiently important to them. To

mitigate these concerns, I tried to adopt a distanced approach when dealing with study participants (Smyth & Holian, 2008) and I regularly discussed my raw data and initial analysis with my supervisors to be able to consider outsider perspectives (Rooney, 2005). Another disadvantage of being an insider-researcher is a risk that participants might provide limited information on certain topics as they assume the researcher already shares their knowledge. This was addressed by having an interview protocol to check if all the areas of interest were covered.

I would argue that I am an insider-researcher for this project as I am a member of the ex-USSR culture and I share many of the participants' characteristics. First, like the study participants, I was educated within the USSR high school and university system. Second, as an academic I have worked at the universities in the ex-USSR and in Australia during the last 25 years. And third, I migrated to Australia as a skilled migrant in 2002 and share the study participants' experiences of migration and settlement in Australia. An additional advantage is that I, like study participants, use Russian as the language of communication with my family and friends. Furthermore, due to my involvement in migration consultancy work, I communicate on a regular basis with USSR/ex-USSR migrants in Australia and people still living in the countries of the ex-USSR. Hence, I see myself as an insider-researcher and therefore I am well suited to listen to and to make sense of the study participants' stories better than an outsider researcher.

Being an insider-researcher has assisted me in grasping the subtleties of the data and in developing my "theoretical sensitivity" (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The best source for growing theoretical sensitivity is the combination of being familiar with the research literature and having professional and personal

experience in the area being studied, so that the researcher can enter the “implicit world of meaning” (Charmaz, 2014). Indeed, to add analytical precision, the researcher should “search out a match in one’s experience for ideas and actions that the respondent has described in the interview” (McCracken, 1988, p. 19). I believe that my self-reflection and examination of my personal values, beliefs and my cultural background assumptions have helped me to recognise some areas of potential bias during the interviews and to distance myself from them, so that they did not affect interview analysis later.

Overall, I feel myself immersed into the culture that I am studying and, therefore, I can see the world through the eyes of the participants. The fact that I am sharing so many categories with the participants of this research and come from the same culture has arguably made the analysis of the data more precise and has improved the validity of this qualitative study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I recognise the possible biases of interviews by an insider-researcher and have been careful to ensure they do not prejudice the interviews nor their interpretations.

#### ***4.3.3. Ethical considerations***

Ethical approval (№ H-2014-207) from the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee was obtained for this research as required. Voluntary participation of the study participants in the research, their confidentiality and anonymity were the most important issues; however, other possible ethical concerns such as safe locations of the interviews, issues of power and undue intrusion into the participants’ life were also considered. Hence, my aim was to collect, analyse and report interview data without compromising study participants’ identities; however, some scholars believe this is not always possible (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Kaiser, 2009; Van den

Hoonard, 2003). According to the ethical research convention, study participants provided their informed consent for participation in the research. To obtain this I explained the essence of the project to the prospective participants, why it was of interest and what I was planning to achieve. I also gave them the details of the interview process and how the interview data was going to be dealt with. In this way some issues of participants' confidentiality were discussed before the consent form was signed, as this is an important step in building trust with study participants (Crow, Wiles, Heath, & Charles, 2006). Participation in the study was totally voluntary and any participant had the right to terminate their research involvement at any time. Every study participant was informed about the risks involved and the possibility of experiencing some mild discomfort. The study procedures had minimal chances of physical harm. However, because the interview included a number of questions about individual migration and settlement in Australia and associated challenges that the interviewees experienced at work, in some cases it could have triggered some stressful memories. To date no study participant has withdrawn from the research project. Each participant was provided with the Participant Information Sheet and Contacts form, Information on Project and Independent Complaints Procedure Sheet (attached in the Appendices section).

Anonymity is one way in which confidentiality is operationalised (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). In this study anonymity of the study participants is ensured by the use of pseudonyms instead of participants' names and not mentioning their affiliation with any particular university. Such characteristics of participants such as gender or occupation were not changed. It is acknowledged, however, that in this study it is not easy to decide the scale of anonymisation necessary, as the research findings may be

presented to different audiences and there is always a chance that some members of the ex-USSR community might be present at events. Thus, the exact quotations from the interviews were chosen to ensure that they could not be used to trace an individual study participant. Yet, due to the ease of identifying people of the particular social group and occupation in the research reports (Allen, 1997), anonymity aspects of this study might not be seen as infallible. While I endeavored to ensure that no one would be able to identify participants of the study, there is still a concern that “knowledgeable community insiders” (Wiles et al., 2008) might attempt to match narratives recounted to identify the participants, and this is beyond my control.

Furthermore, data security measures need to be in place to prevent accidental or deliberate disclosure of the information provided at the interview in such a way that an individual or institution might be compromised (Wiles et al., 2008). Thus, another way to ensure confidentiality of the study participants and data they provided is by the strict adherence to the data and information management procedures, and following information storage and sharing protocols (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Wiles et al., 2008; Yin, 2003). In this study the raw data, which include audio files, digital material, official documents, researcher’s notes and other evidence, was organised into the database to be available for the inspection only by the researcher and the research study supervisors. Using a database has arguably improved the reliability of this case study, because all the data and information is stored in one place, easily accessible to be retrieved, organised, sorted, compared and linked. All electronic files are stored in password protected university computers and they are not accessible when the computer is unattended. Participants’ electronic files are also password-protected and data is encrypted when being transferred. Any hardcopies are stored in a securely



locked cabinet in a lockable room. When personal participants' data is no longer needed, it is going to be disposed of in 7 years in accordance with the University of Adelaide policy of research records retention and disposal. In addition, not discussing information provided by the participants with the others, whether it was in the research context or not, has also helped to keep participants' confidentiality. So, in this way the access to the identifiable information is limited and the confidentiality of the study participants is ensured.

Some other less critical ethical issues have been identified and addressed, for example, interview location and issues of power. Thus, it was ensured the interviews were carried out in locations safe for both the researcher and the interviewee. The issues of power relationship have also been considered, as interviewees come from various academic hierarchy levels, ranging from early career researchers to university professors. To alleviate this concern I have attempted to create a non-threatening, informal and power equitable environment (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002; Thwaites, 2017) by offering an option to choose a native language as the language of communication, by negotiating a secure, quiet and private venue for the interview, and by being friendly and relaxed. In most cases the relationship between study participants and the researcher was balanced between developing friendship and maintaining the distance that would ideally allow professional judgement (Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009). Being an insider-researcher has minimized the risk of participants or myself being mistreated during the interviews, as most of the study participants saw the researcher as one of them and were genuinely willing to take part in the study, rather than feeling an obligation to participate.

#### **4.3.4. Language**

As the researcher and all participants have two languages in common (Russian and English) and were educated under the same USSR/ex-USSR system of education, it was necessary to make choices about the language used in interviews. Some methodologists note that using the interviewee's native language has a potential to boost an interviewee's willingness to share his/her observations, memories, and some private information (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Welch & Piekkari, 2006). From another point of view, native language is closely linked not only to people's perceptions of themselves, but also to understanding people and the world around them. Besides, the association between language and identity is considered to be strong and thus interviewees might "neutralize" or "emphasize" their nationality or ethnic identity by using their national or second language (Welch & Piekkari, 2006).

Participants of this study are bilingual or even multilingual, as they come from a variety of the ex-USSR countries, where learning Russian language was compulsory and learning the national language of the particular republic was often optional. Literature in the field of language, culture and identity argues, that in a bilingual person, each language is associated with a distinct set of values (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Lin, 2007). Because the research questions of this study are focused on the participants' perceptions of their migration from the ex-USSR countries and settlement in Australia – the processes that are closely connected to the cultural, social, and economic aspects – it is important that study participants are given an option to choose the interview language (Gimenez & Morgan, 2017). All participants were fluent in Russian and English, even though Russian was not always their primary language. Hence, in this study the choice between Russian and English languages was

offered to all participants. Russian was the language of choice for nearly all participants and English was used only once, which confirms Pavlenko's (2006) conclusions on the role of Russian language as a lingua franca for communication between the people from the USSR/ex-USSR. The preference to use Russian language is likely due to the fact that the researcher's native language is Russian: traditionally it is the Russian language that is generally used for everyday conversations with family and community members of the ex-USSR countries.

Every interview was transcribed in the language it was carried out. When the interview was in Russian, the relevant segments or the whole interviews, were translated into English by the researcher, who is a professional (NAATI accredited) translator. My knowledge of both Russian and English helped me to avoid a number of biases that happen when interviews are translated from one language to another, such as the meaning of phrases being lost in translation, or compromising the validity of the data. Translating the interviews was not extremely difficult; however, there were some challenges. Because there is such a difference in cultures between Russia and the West, there were some cases when there were no good English equivalents available, especially when participants referred to their Soviet experiences, joked or used idioms. Besides, some currently used educational terms just did not exist in the Soviet terminology at all. All the study participants have had careers at Australian universities, which have required them to develop a good control of academic and social English. Thus, while talking about Australian realities, some participants felt free to insert relevant English terms into their narratives to make sure I had understood exactly what they mean.

There are several advantages of using Russian language in this study. First, the use of native language by both participants and the researcher during the interview provided an opportunity to collect authentic, accurate and rich data. Second, the use of Russian communication norms and language helped to build a rapport with the interviewees, to see the situation through the participants' eyes, and to construct shared understanding and intersubjective meaning (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). Third, due to the fact that the researcher carried out translations herself, interview translations represent an accurate interpretation of the meaning as there are minimal cultural differences in the use of lexically corresponding concepts between the interviewees and the translator (Inheteven, 2012).

#### **4.4. Study participant recruitment**

The researcher should be pragmatic and flexible in the approach to sampling and choose an adequate sample size that sufficiently answers the research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). In this study a four-point approach to sampling was used: setting a "sample universe", selecting a sample size, devising a sample strategy and sample sourcing (Robinson, 2014).

In making decision about "sample universe" or target population I have specified the inclusion and exclusion criteria for potential participation in the study. The target population of this study is quite homogenous, as there are definite inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only the participants who are ex- or current academic and research staff of the higher education institutions of South Australia and ex-USSR, and who migrated as adults to Australia from the ex-USSR countries, were eligible for the study.

The following selection criteria were applied:

1. Inclusion criteria
  - a. Age: 28-80<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Before migrating to Australia as an adult, participants were born in the USSR and studied and worked in the USSR or in a post-Soviet country university/research institute.
  - c. Participant could be a current or former academic/research staff member of a South Australian higher education institution (including universities, technical and further education, and private higher education providers). Please, note, “research staff” includes current research degree students who previously had been academics or researchers in the ex-USSR.
2. Exclusion criteria
  - d. Migrated as a child to Australia and therefore educated (primary, secondary and higher education) in Australia.
  - e. Have been employed by a higher education institution as professional or administrative staff, not as an academic or researcher.

Thus, the target population of this study is an adult population of ex-USSR academics that shares not only the life history of living and studying in the ex-USSR countries, but also the history of migrating to Australia. To preserve participant anonymity, the exact ex-USSR republic from which they originated is not stated. However, primary demographic data reveals that over half of the participants come from the bigger cities, e.g., Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Tashkent, Alma-Ata, and Novosibirsk. This is not surprising, given research centres and universities were historically concentrated in the bigger cities of the USSR (Graham, 1993). However, using the rigid inclusion and

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<sup>1</sup> The age criteria are redundant: the age was specified to ensure every participant had completed his/her school and higher education under the Soviet/post-Soviet system of education.

exclusion criteria, I was not able to include the following population group: academic migrants from the ex-USSR countries who have never commenced work at an Australian university or those who have been working in the South Australian higher education before and left for interstate positions or retired. There is no data on the size of this group, and thus their challenges of continuing to be academics or changing their career pathway are not described. Hence, I am aware that this category of the USSR migrants was not given an opportunity to share their experiences. While this limitation might reduce the generalizability of this study's findings, it provides avenues for further investigations.

The addition of exclusion or inclusion criteria in these different domains increases sample homogeneity (Robinson, 2014). Besides, having a well-defined target population demonstrates not only what the study is about, but also plays an important role in the analysis and interpretation process, as it relates to the level of generality to which the study's findings are relevant (Mason, 2017). Hence, the explicit description of the sample universe contributes to the study transparency and credibility (Flick, 2008; Jenner, Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004; Robinson, 2014).

In making decisions about the sample size of this study I have considered several aspects, particularly the aim of the study, the specifics of the sample, the established practices, and the analysis strategy (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). This exploratory case study aims to investigate experiences of the particular professional group of the ex-USSR migrants and is centred on understanding individual experience, thus a limited number of study participants is necessary to achieve the aim (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Robinson, 2014). One of the benefits of the smaller sample size is that the researcher can analyse each participant's case intensively, which

provides an opportunity to give the individuals within the sample a defined identity, rather than treat them as an anonymous part of a larger whole (Robinson & Smith, 2010).

The established practices consistently endorse that a qualitative research project requires from 2 to 30 participants and refer to saturation that is often assumed to be a “gold standard” for defining the sample size (Creswell, 1998; Guest et al., 2006; Malterud et al., 2016; Morse, 2000). Saturation is generally understood as an indicator that on the basis of the data that have been collected and/or analysed until now, further data collection and/or analysis would be redundant (Saunders, et al. 2018; Fusch, 2015). Guest et al. (2006) argues that a sample size of 12 participants for a homogenous study is often enough for saturation to be reached, while Robinson (2014) suggests a guideline of around 3 to 16 participants for an idiographic single study. While Morse (1994, 2000) agrees that saturation is crucial to proper qualitative work, she also states that there are no guidelines for the adequate estimation of the sample size required to reach saturation. There is, however, a general rule, that “the greater the amount of useable data obtained from each person (as number of interviews and so forth), the fewer the number of participants” (Morse, 2000, p. 4) required. Data collection should stop when fewer surprises and little new comes out of interviews and when there are no more emergent patterns in the data (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Green & Thorogood, 2018). The one-to-one and 1.5-hour semi-structured interviews have allowed me to obtain the richness of data required for qualitative analysis.

Participant recruitment was by purposeful sampling (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Patton, 2002). Because of the narrow topic of this research, only specific categories of

the migrant population were eligible. Thus, for the interviews I invited participants who fitted the strict selection criteria and were available and willing to contribute, anticipating that they would be insightful, comprehensive, articulate and honest (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I acknowledge that the sampling is biased by the selection criteria towards those ex-USSR migrants who have migrated within the last 3 to 30 years and maintained stable and successful careers in their South Australian higher education institutions. That is, the participants did not disclose negative stories of failure in the outcomes of their migration experiences.

To find the participants, I performed an initial search of the public access online telephone directories of the three largest higher education providers operating in South Australia, namely, The University of Adelaide, University of South Australia and Flinders University. The search focus was to define teaching/research staff with “USSR-sounding” surnames. For example, I looked for the surnames ending in “in/ina” or “ko” or “ov/ova” or “yan” or “dze” or “ovich” or “shvili” or “chuk”, etc.; also, I kept an eye out for first names popular in the USSR. This pilot search returned 23 names from the University of Adelaide, 21 names from the University of South Australia and 21 names from Flinders University, indicating that there is a large body of suitable subjects currently resident in Adelaide, South Australia. I contacted each of them, using the email provided in the staff directory, asking them if they would be willing to answer a number of eligibility questions. Out of the total 65 respondents, 23 were eligible; however, only 11 from this list agreed to be interviewed. A further 14 participants were selected through a snowball method after the initial few interviews, as every interviewee suggested a few potential participants’ names and provided contact details. Initial contact with every potential participant was made by email, which



informed them of the study's aim, its voluntary nature, confidentiality arrangements and the expected length of the interview. In addition, a flyer with the researcher's contact details was distributed in South Australian ex-USSR community groups, churches and ethnic schools; however, only one person has initiated contact with the researcher on his own. No benefits or incentives have been offered to increase the likelihood of participation. The recruitment flyer and an email invitation are attached in Appendix 6.

Study participants' demographic information was collected as part of the interview to better describe academics from the USSR. Demographic information that was collected for this study includes gender, age, age at migration, length of time in Australia, level of education, marital status, ethnicity, religion, and position/nature of job. Most demographic variables are in nominal scale format (gender, marital status, year of migration, religion, job); there is also some in ordinal scale format (length of time in Australia, level of education, age). Before asking demographic questions, the choice of language was offered, which is discussed earlier in this chapter.

The actual participants' names are substituted by the ex-USSR-country-sounding pseudonyms, not only to protect participants' anonymity, but also to let the researcher be more objective and less fixated on the names and the personalities behind them (Bryman & Burgess, 2002). Every participant's age was recorded as to the age bracket provided in the table at the moment of interview. Each participant's gender was recorded from their words. The fact that each participant is a migrant from an ex-USSR country and has been working for a South Australian university was also confirmed at the initial study of enrolment.

Participants' actual discipline was recorded; however, due to the ease of identifying the actual participants, the participants' disciplines and fields of research in Table 4.1 are indicated by the faculty they are listed under. For this study the faculties are listed in accordance to The University of Adelaide structure, where I am a PhD candidate, notwithstanding the actual university that participant is associated with. Thus, there are five faculties: Arts; Engineering, Computing and Mathematical Sciences; Health and Medical Sciences; Professions; and Sciences (faculties are listed in alphabetical order). Table 4.1 lists study participants in accordance to the faculty and age group they identified themselves belonging to. The sample population covers a range of ages and disciplines. I recruited more women than men (37% of participants are male), but for the purposes of this study the key factor was to include experiences of both female and male academics.

Table 4.1. Study participants by pseudonym, faculty, age, and gender.

<i>Participant's Pseudonym</i>	<i>Faculty</i>	<i>Age group<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Gender</i>
Nadia	Arts	35-44	Female
Nina	Arts	45-54	Female
Vadim	Engineering, Computing and Mathematical Sciences	24-34	Male
Maria	Engineering, Computing and Mathematical Sciences	45-54	F
Vasiliy	Engineering, Computing and Mathematical Sciences	45-54	Male
Kostya	Engineering, Computing and Mathematical Sciences	45-54	Male
Alexey	Engineering, Computing and Mathematical Sciences	55-64	Male

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<sup>2</sup> Inclusion criteria from the age of 24 is here to ensure every participant would have completed school and at least an undergraduate degree. However, the youngest participant was 28.

<i>Participant's Pseudonym</i>	<i>Faculty</i>	<i>Age group<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>Gender</i>
Alina	Health and Medical Sciences	24-34	Female
Ludmila	Health and Medical Sciences	35-44	Female
Oksana	Health and Medical Sciences	45-54	Female
Ilya	Health and Medical Sciences	55-64	M
Marina	Professions	24-34	Female
Sofia	Professions	35-44	Female
Lena	Professions	35-44	Female
Inna	Professions	45-54	Female
			Female
Galina	Sciences	24-34	Female
Ekaterina	Sciences	24-34	Female
Rostislav	Sciences	35-44	Male
Ruslana	Sciences	35-44	Female
Tamara	Sciences	45-54	Female
Leonid	Sciences	55-64	Male
Lada	Sciences	55-64	Female
Yaroslav	Sciences	55-64	Male
Maxim	Sciences	55-64	Male

#### **4.5. Data analysis methods**

The content analysis framework guiding my data analysis method is aimed at identifying, analysing and reporting the patterns within the data (Bryman, 2015; Bryman & Burgess, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Richards & Morse, 2012). Researchers see this method as a traditional approach to make sense of the multi-context data (Richards & Morse, 2012) and as one of the major coding traditions (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016). Application of content analyses can transform a text

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<sup>3</sup> Inclusion criteria from the age of 24 is here to ensure every participant would have completed school and at least an undergraduate degree. However, the youngest participant was 28.

or recorded human communication into a standardized form that can force the researcher to make judgements about the meaning of the data (Babbie, 2016). In particular, I apply the general inductive approach to the analysis of the collected data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Thomas, 2006). The choice of inductive approach is driven by the primary aim of my analysis: “to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Some might argue that a phenomenological approach would be, perhaps, more suitable for this study as it seeks to make sense of the peoples’ lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Smith, 2015; Thorne, 2000); however, the expected outcome of the findings will not be a coherent narrative about the lived experience, but the description of the most important themes (McCracken, 1988; Thomas, 2006).

To manage the raw data and to make sense of it, the following broad tasks were defined: data preparation and organisation, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Richards & Morse, 2012). Thus, to begin with, every recorded interview was transcribed and a hardcopy was printed out. Electronic copies of interview transcripts were stored on the researcher’s password-protected university computer; a backup was created to be stored on a portable hard drive in a locked cupboard in the researcher’s university office. Also, at that stage the decision to analyse both manifest content and latent context was made. The focus of manifest analysis is mostly on that which is explicitly mentioned by participants, while the analysis of the latent context deals with interpreting the underlying meaning behind participants’ explicit statements and nonverbal communication, such as sighs, silence, posture, and laughter (Berg, 2004;

Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Neuman, 2014). Being an insider-researcher, my assumption is that I might see many things in the same light as the study participants, so I understand the subtleties of meaning and fine details. I understand that focusing on latent analysis might introduce subjectivity and speculation (Boyatzis, 1998); therefore, I cautiously use both manifest and latent content in my analysis.

The next step in the content data analysis is the coding. First, each interview transcript was read and some general notes were made on what the study participant was discussing in each part of the interview. In doing this, I concentrated on sorting important information from that which was less important for the purposes of this study. Then, the raw texts were read in detail repeatedly until an initial understanding of the themes emerged. The headings or labels were recorded on the transcriptions to describe the content (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Thomas, 2006). This analysis was also partially guided by the major themes that were derived from the preliminary literature analysis and which were used as the key points in developing the interview questions. It is recommended that observations made during this stage of analysis should be carried out until nearly all the implications and possibilities are exhausted (McCracken, 1988, p. 45). The open coding allowed me to identify specific text segments relating to the main themes. These segments were labelled to create initial categories.

The next step of the analysis was to reduce redundancy among the initial categories. For that the marked text segments for each category were transferred into separate documents for each category/subcategory and further analysed. Initially, some data was classified as belonging to several categories simultaneously, while some text segments were not coded at all; this inconsistency was then reduced (Dey, 1993; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Thomas, 2006). For instance, I have noticed that the use of English

language was spoken about in various contexts. Some study participants were talking about initial problems with English at the settlement stage of their lives, some were worrying about the level of English of their university students, some reflected on the general perception of researchers with a Russian accent by Australian academics. Through the interpretation and comparison decisions were made whether some particular sub-categories belong to one or different categories (Dey, 1993). In this way the refining of the categories continued; for example, in some cases two categories were combined or linked under one subcategory when the meaning was similar (Thomas, 2006). My analysis of the interviews translated into English was independently evaluated by the PhD supervisors, so that the core messages reported by the participants were noted accordingly. This resulted in a smaller number of categories that capture key aspects of the most important themes of the study.

#### **4.6. Validity, reliability and generalisability**

A qualitative study needs to demonstrate its reliability, validity and generalisability (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Golafshani, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). This study was designed in such a way that the data collected and the results following analysis were credible, transparent, and trustworthy. This study was checked for reliability and validity through the sampling technique and saturation, other people's examination and the researcher's reflexivity.

One of the ways to ensure the reliability of a qualitative study is to check the rigour of the study sampling and saturation. The target population of this study was defined, described and transparent exclusion and inclusion criteria were used to recruit the participants. The sampling process was guided by the research questions and the study aim, so it is likely that it would "prevent unwarranted generalisation and helps to

locate the study within a place, a time and a meaningful group” (Robinson, 2014, p. 38). Saturation is a generic quality criterion for any qualitative study. Failure to reach data saturation impacts the quality of the research (Fusch & Ness, 2015); however, it is agreed that saturation is achieved at a comparatively low level (Creswell, 1998; Guest et al., 2006; Morse, 2000; Richards & Morse, 2012). Twenty-four participants were recruited for this study and the quality of the data is defensible. In addition, because no new categories or themes emerged from data after it has been coded, it is concluded that the point of saturation was reached. More important for this case study research is the depth and richness of might be more useful (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Polkinghorne, 2005). Consequently, having collected rich data that is multi-layered, intricate, detailed, and nuanced, I have further enhanced this study’s reliability and quality.

Member checking was used to examine the validity of the raw data. Study participants were given an opportunity to check if the raw data (transcripts of their own interviews) was captured and interpreted correctly. Member checking is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Thus, interview transcripts were sent to participants, so that they could check them for errors, challenge the correctness of the facts and events and in this way confirm the credibility of the information. No inaccuracies or mistakes were reported by the study participants and in that way the authenticity of the data was established and confirmed. In addition, intra-coder reliability (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013) was established through the researcher recoding 10% of the interviews; on finishing the initial coding, I re-coded the first three interviews and obtained the same results.

In addition, validity and reliability of this qualitative study is supported by the researcher's reflexivity. As mentioned in the Section 4.3.2, I consider myself to be an insider-researcher as I have a prolonged engagement with the people and the country that the participants were born in, as I have also graduated from a Soviet/ex-USSR school and university, and worked at an ex-USSR university as an academic. Therefore, I share the same characteristics as study participants; due to the fact that my and participants' background and native language are the same, many of the tangible and invisible details touched upon during the interviews were also noticed and included into the analysis. Of course, I am subjective and I have described my role as a insider-researcher in the Section 4.3.2 to disclose the possibility of being biased. However, to mitigate my bias as best as I can and to balance my position to a certain extent, during the interviews I have acted as an independent observer: I have not tried to open a discussion with the participants or express my own views or beliefs during any interview, nor did I share my personal story with them. I have also considered my own readings of the truthfulness and appropriateness of the participants' responses and have critically reflected on the social, cultural and historical forces that are shaping my understanding and interpretation of the data, and looked for contradictions in the evidence.

Admittedly, any researcher's subjectivity could be seen both as a strength and as a study limitation. Indeed, the researcher is likely to analyse the data and make the decisions on what is important and significant as to his/her own point of view. It may be also difficult to establish if the researcher has known participants previously and how he/she has arrived at the study conclusions (Bryman, 2015). This limitation is overcome by ensuring the study is carried out in accordance with good practice using



established methods for this type of research. On the other hand, this limitation could be seen as an advantage, as the insider-observer is acting as an “agent of culture” (Ashworth, 1995). Indeed, the participant-researcher’s understanding of the group being studied is necessarily a joint product of the researcher-participant and the group (Ashworth, 1995). Thus, a researcher’s subjectivity can be viewed as an advantage as the insider-researcher has a broader and deeper knowledge of the context and background of this study, thus the findings represent the understandings of the participants more clearly and realistically.

Finally, it is important to establish the study’s generalisability. Traditionally it is assumed that, due to the nature of qualitative study and non-representational number of participants, a study of this type has a limited generalizability. It is, therefore, impossible to ensure the study findings could be extended to the wider population or applied in different settings. Indeed, the study findings will not produce a “sweeping sociological statements that hold good over long periods of time, or across ranges of cultures” (Payne & Williams, 2005, p. 297). Twenty four study participants cannot represent the entire population nor even one whole cultural group. However, some scholars argue that the “moderatum generalisations” approach (Williams, 2000) might be applicable to the findings of qualitative studies. For example, in this particular study the findings are possibly generalizable to other international academics and researchers in Australian higher education (Payne & Williams, 2005; Williams, 2000). The current study findings could be treated as having a hypothetical character; thus, they might be viewed as a testable proposition to be confirmed or refuted through further evidence (Payne & Williams, 2005). Therefore, while it is understood that the findings of this qualitative case study might not be easily generalizable to the wider

population, it is argued that there is a feasible opportunity for the transferability of the findings from this group of international academic migrants from particular countries.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

The study employs an exploratory approach in investigating the experiences of the South Australian university researchers and academics who migrated to Australia from the ex-USSR countries. The main tool for this qualitative case study is the semi-structured individual interview. This chapter describes the procedures of study participants' sampling, data collection and analysis. Generalization, the researcher's subjectivity and the non-representative sample size could be seen as the limitations of this study. Nevertheless, being an insider-researcher has some advantages and improves the validity of this qualitative study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The validity of the study is supported by the strategies of sampling and member checking.

Therefore, I believe the study findings are valid, reliable and transferrable in the context of international academic migration in the higher education environment and the findings will help to understand the experience of being a migrant academic in Australia. Although the study pivots around academic mobility from an authoritarian party-controlled education system to the Australian system, the experiences of the ex-USSR migrants are not unique; academics from China, Vietnam and many other countries come from education and social systems that are modelled on the Soviet Union. More than that, the findings of this study are useful for a more general understanding of the experiences of academic mobility irrespective of the national context.

## **PART I: MIGRATION MOTIVATIONS AND NON-ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIC MOBILITY**

As stated in the Chapter 1, there are two parts of the thesis that present data discussion chapters. Part I mainly deals with non-academic experiences of academic mobility, while Part II is dedicated to analysis of the professional experiences of academics under study. Part I of the thesis consists of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. The focus of the Chapter 5 is on the motivations of the ex-USSR academics to migrate to Australia, while their settlement challenges are discussed in the Chapter 6. The experiences of migration and settlement might not be unique to this group of participants and generally confirm scholarly findings in sociology, migration and intercultural studies (see, for example, Austin, 2007; Berry, 2005, 2009; Barrett & Mosca, 2013; Ward, Bocher, & Furnham, 2005; Bhabha, 2004; Manathunga, 2007). The findings of the Part I add to the general discussion of academic mobility by highlighting that on the one hand, the experiences of academic mobility might lead to individual changes; and, on the other hand, academic mobility can impact the host society.

### **Chapter 5 Migration motivations**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

As the result of globalisation, flows of people have intensified and increased in recent decades and mobility has taken new forms (De Bruijn, van Dijk, & Foeken, 2001; Hahn & Klute, 2007). Migration has often been explained as economically motivated (De Haas, 2009; Dustmann & Weiss, 2007; Faist, 2000; Todaro & Smith, 2012); however, macro-trends in economic, political and military affairs are closely related to the changes in social and cultural patterns (Castles, 2007b, 2010, 2017; Portes, 2010). To understand the migration and settlement experiences of academic migrants, I have

explored their migration motivations first, as often professional reasons to migrate are interlinked with individual motives (Richardson et al., 2004). A traditional theoretical “push” and “pull” model is applied in the following analysis. As described in the Chapter 2, this model is often used to describe negative aspects of the home country that caused people to migrate and positives of the alternative country that attracted people (Da Wan & Sirat, 2018; Huang, 2018, Kuzhabekova & Lee, 2018; Morley, Alexiadou, Garaz, S. et al., 2018). The combination of push and pull factors can determine the direction of migration flows and their size (Portes & Böröcz, 1989). However, people’s individual choices and worldwide interconnectedness are also to be considered, as migration is “an intrinsic part of broader processes of development, social transformation and globalisation” (Castles et al., 2013, p. 51). In this chapter traditional push and pull factors were explored and classified into the wider economic, political, social and professional factors that are often interwoven and thus difficult to classify conclusively (Kurekova, 2011).

For this study, push and pull factors must be considered in the context of the particular situation in the ex-USSR countries during the period between 1995 and 2000, when most of the study participants migrated to Australia:

Individual savings were depreciated, and old ideals destroyed. Many institutions were disbanded or reformed carelessly. Oligarchic groups - possessing absolute control over information channels - served exclusively their own corporate interests. Mass poverty began to be seen as the norm. And all this was happening against the backdrop of a dramatic economic downturn, unstable finances, and the paralysis of the social sphere. (Putin, 2005)

This assessment of the situation in post-Soviet Russia was characteristic of most countries of the ex-Soviet Bloc and it was expected that many migratory decisions of the study participants could have been taken to escape this environment. As one of the participants mentioned, it was not easy to migrate anywhere from the ex-USSR countries:

*Everyone knew that we would like to migrate. We did not advertise our wish, but we did not make it a secret either. No one believed it was possible and no one supported us. (Ludmila)*

The emphasis of this chapter, then, is on classifying reasons of the Soviet and post-Soviet academics to migrate to Australia. This chapter will also investigate if an income gain was the main motivation to migrate to Australia for study participants. Data demonstrated that there were four broad categories of social, economic and political migration motivation factors: the first three were applicable to most Australian skilled migrants from the ex-USSR, while the fourth category relating to professional factors is specific to the academic migrants.

## **5.2. Social motivations to migrate**

The social factors related to migration usually include national belonging and ethnicity, religion, race, and culture. They often consist of the combination of pull and push factors that are interlinked with economic and political factors. Among the most important motivations for the study participant motivations relating to the social sphere were: family and social network factors, and lifestyle opportunities (including environmental factors).

### **5.2.1. Family**

One of the main motivations to migrate that academics from the USSR/ex-USSR countries revealed during the interviews was their desire to gain better opportunities for the family's future, and especially for the children. Study participant Ludmila summarised it for many academic families in the following way:

*Our motivation [to migrate to Australia] was "to find a better life". It included the future for the kids and professional opportunities for us.*

(Ludmila)

Study participant Leonid reported he was "*quite all right living*" and working in the ex-USSR country until he started a family, which had changed his thinking:

*I started thinking about immigration just after I got married and the first child was born. I realised then that my youth is over and I had to take serious decisions and think about the future of my family.*

(Leonid)

For him, the future of his young family would be much better if they migrated to another country. His doubts and worries were about his ability to provide a decent life for the family, as he had experienced many challenges living in the ex-USSR country – a country he viewed with a "*high degree of uncertainty*". Another study participant Vasiliy endorsed the idea that uncertainties and even fears for the future of his children were one of the main reasons for his decision to migrate to Australia. Vasiliy reported he considered the USSR social environment as not desirable for bringing up children: "*Main motivation to leave the USSR was that it was impossible to live there. How could I bring up my kids there, in their culture?*". Thus, the culture and social

atmosphere in the country was a push factor, while hopes for a better future for the children were a pull factor.

One more family-related migration motivation factor identified was to keep the family together (which might also be seen as another migration pull factor). While several study participants wanted to move closer to their sibling family in Australia, some were forced to follow their spouses:

*I went with my family as I was facing the decision – if I were not to move we would have divorced. So, I followed my husband and we moved to Australia. (Nina)*

Moreover, family networks provided an important incentive to migrate to Australia. Two out of twenty-four study participants reported they had relatives residing in Australia, who provided them with the assurance their migration would be worthwhile:

*I was not thinking of migrating to Australia. But then my brother moved here and liked it here. So, he applied for us to move here and when we arrived his support was invaluable. (Oksana)*

This study confirmed that some families were inclined to disadvantage some members of the family for the benefit of the whole family; clearly, migration was not automatically and equally of benefit to every member of the migrant family (McDonald, 2013, ANU; Dumon, 1989). Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that the overall benefit of the family, optimistic futures for children and a desire to keep the family together were major pull factors for many of the study participants' migration to Australia.

### **5.2.2. Social networks**

Social networks are one of the primary sources for spreading information about migration, lifestyle opportunities and benefits of living abroad.

Before the era of Internet, personal and social contacts were the most valuable source of information in addition to library books. For example, participant Inna reported that her husband was collecting information about Australia from various sources for over two years:

*Information [about migration to Australia] was scarce. In 1998-1999 we still could not get Internet in our place. To get some understanding, we kept on talking to various travel agencies and we visited the Australian consulate in Moscow, so bit by bit built some picture of how to migrate to Australia had appeared. Funny enough, the only book that we read about Australia was a tour guide of 150 pages, 80 pages of which were pictures. (Inna)*

More recently, Ex-USSR citizens preferred to use the Russian online *media* and social *networking* websites, such as V Kontakte [In Contact] and Odnoklassniki [Classmates] (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2011) in addition to Facebook. Some study participants reported these websites were their sources of tourist and settlement information in Australia. Many study participants mentioned that, before they decided to migrate, they found a number of ex-patriot blogs describing their everyday life in Australia. They read many inspiring stories, so the decision to migrate seemed a sensible choice:

*Internet. Dial-up. ... We really were not seriously interested in America or any other country. We were consciously planning for Australia only. We*



*did not want to migrate just somewhere; we knew we wanted to migrate to South Australia and to settle in Adelaide. (Ludmila)*

Via social networks some participants could locate people in Australia that they knew in person and established trustworthy communication. For instance, participant Kostya reported he found his school teachers were living in South Australia and started to correspond with them. So, when the time came to move to Australia, his teachers took the initiative *“to organise everything”* for his family, including accommodation, transport, first job, and an introduction to the Russian community.

There were certain limitations to obtaining information from social networks: people tended to share positive information and keep the negatives thoughts to themselves, resulting in the overly optimistic expectations of the prospective migrants. Overall, findings demonstrated that social networks played an important role in motivating people to move to Australia. They also kept people updated about migration issues and everyday life in Australia.

### ***5.2.3. Lifestyle and environment***

Living in a cleaner natural environment and having opportunities for a physically active lifestyle are associated with improved health and quality of life (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Ståhl et al., 2001). A more desirable lifestyle and opportunities for recreation and leisure in South Australia were other very popular migration motivations among the ex-USSR academics.

Study participant Marina was trying to escape a hectic and demanding life in her home ex-USSR country, which was *“just stressful, stressful, and stressful”* with the hope of finding some stable, quiet harbour in South Australia. In addition to stability,

opportunities for sports and recreation were important for many academics.

Participant Maxim decided to move to Australia not only because he had friends there, but also because he knew that sports were very popular in Australia. He was eager to be fit and active:

Of course, here were my friends. And good climate. And the ocean. I love diving. I love sports. And look, I can do everything here – from tennis to even ice hockey. I have even brought my hockey uniform here. (Maxim)

Thus, the opportunities of a healthy lifestyle were a pull factor for this study participant. Similarly, participant Vasiliy was so impressed by the availability and quality of the tennis courts, which he spotted while attending an international conference in South Australia, that he joked his passion for tennis anticipated a migration destination to South Australia for all his family:

*I saw 41 tennis courts with Grand Slam tournaments quality grass and just two people playing. "I want to be the third one playing here" - I said to myself. ... I can say I moved here [Australia] due to my love for tennis. (Vasiliy)*

Environmental factors were listed by many academics as important lifestyle factors in their decision to migrate to Australia. Many reported they wanted to enjoy a better climate and the cleaner Australian environment:

*I knew the weather was nicer [in Australia] and the sky was not as gloomy and grey [as in her ex-USSR country] and you could go to the beach. (Marina)*

The Australian climate was familiar to those from certain ex -USSR countries:

*My husband researched a lot and found Australia. He said it was such an interesting country, the climate was the same as in [our ex-USSR country] - lots of sun, and we should love it there. (Nadia)*

Another reason to move to Australia was to explore Australia's natural environment, to enjoy vast clean beaches, wilderness, and outback bush:

*I was more interested in the continent as it was, in its nature. ... In climate as well, but mostly in nature. (Vadim)*

Participant Nadia reported one of her motivations to move to Australia “*was closer to an adventure, rather than for better pay and more food*”. This participant, however, migrated to Australia not directly from the ex-USSR, but after her family had spent over five years in Europe – hence, one of her motivations for migration is more lifestyle focused.

Study participants were motivated to move to South Australia to live in the cleaner Australian environment, enjoy beautiful beaches, participate in sporting activities, enjoy the Mediterranean climate, and explore national parks and reserves. Overall, lifestyle and environment pulled academic migrants to move to South Australia to live potentially healthier and happier lives.

### **5.3 Economic motivations**

Economic migration motivations are traditionally defined as the primary reason migrants decide to leave their country of origin. In particular, unemployment and low wages in the country of origin are often reported to be economic push factors (Borjas, 1994; Drinkwater, Eade, & Garapich, 2009; Massey et al., 1999; Wallace, 2002).

Similarly, data demonstrated that ex-USSR academic migrants were often motivated to migrate in order to better provide for their families. In this study, push and pull economic motivation factors relevant to academic migrants were identified. Economic factors were interlinked with social and family push factors and do exacerbate them. Low wages and underpayment, lack of research funding, and poor living conditions (in particular, housing) were push factors, while the South Australian state government migrant support program was reported to be a pull factor.

### **5.3.1. Low wages and underpayment**

Historically, scientists and researchers in the USSR have always earned very modest salaries; and recent publications confirm this situation has not changed much in many ex-USSR countries (Ilina, Kryukova, Zotova, Kuznetsova, & Nakhratova, 2016; Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2017; Kuzhabekova & Mukhamejanova, 2017). Study participants reported they and their colleagues were very close to, if not below the poverty line in the 1990s and 2000s. For example, participant Alexey reported:

*In [ex-USSR country] at the beginning of the 90s a salary of a researcher was 3 dollars a month. What motivation are we talking about? I had to. Some [academics] turned into salesmen and I have chosen migration. (Alexey)*

Another participant shared her memories:

*Scientists have never been big “earners” in the USSR... At those times [after the USSR fall] many [scientists] were thinking of leaving [science] as it was almost impossible to survive if you were a scientist. (Oksana)*

Indeed, most participants lived through financial difficulties themselves. Many study participants confirmed that their wages at the research institutes were ridiculously low. It appears this situation has not much improved recently: the average monthly salary of a postdoctoral researcher in Russia is \$250 per month, and a full professor gets \$437 per month on the average. In Ukraine, these figures are \$100 and \$400 respectively, with the average monthly income per academic of \$200 (EUI, 2018). By contrast, participants did not mention their current income in Australia, so there is no information if they perceive it as adequate, high or low; however, it is significantly higher than in the post-Soviet universities.

Low wages for academics in post-Soviet countries were just part of the financial environment; underpayment due to the financial crisis in those countries was another reality of the 1990s. Following the collapse of the USSR in 1991 most of the ex-USSR countries went into deep economic crisis with high inflation, so a cost-reduction mechanism of delaying wage payments was introduced (Commander, Dhar, & Yemtsov, 1995). The practice of the companies and government institutions not to pay their employees for several months was seen as an effective economic measure allowing employees to keep working and produce goods and services, while inflation rendered the money owed them as useless (Earle & Sabirianova, 2002). Study participant Leonid recounted: *"We were waiting for the salary to be paid for months [in the ex-USSR]"*. Indeed, some people were lucky to get paid twice or three times a year, as some received even less (Giles, 1996). The situation in the ex-USSR countries was such that unqualified workers and labourers were paid more often, so academics had to find something to live on. Thus, it was considered normal for academics to work in several odd jobs after hours for the sake of surviving:

*Out of 7 years that I was working there [Academy of Science research institute] over 3 years I worked on pure enthusiasm: salary was so low that it was not enough to pay for the transport to get to work. ... So, I had to get a second job and mostly worked at nights and weekends as a security guard at the [xxx] consulate. (Kostya)*

In many cases it was easier to close a research institute than pay salary to its staff. Some academics were lucky to be employed casually, some left the academy. Study participant Tamara recounted the situation in the mid-90s, when her research institute in closed:

*With our research institute closure, we had to do something we knew well, we wanted to find a job in the field. Having jumped for two years from one short-term contract to another with various R&D companies I realised – there was no money in science. (Tamara)*

Likewise, study participant Kostya from another ex-USSR country experienced a similar situation:

*Finally everyone left – it was not possible to survive in science – absolutely no funding. ... The research institute administration had given up and sold the land and the laboratory [building]. (Kostya)*

So, the findings demonstrate that many study participants were exhausted and demoralised by a lengthy period of economic decline in their ex-USSR country. Feelings of instability and uncertainty lasting for decades were found to be among the strongest economic push factors for migration for many of the study participants: “I

*would like to live in a stable [Australian] economy” (Alina); “We got tired to wait if anything would change for the best” (Maria).*

### **5.3.2. Living conditions and housing**

Living conditions in the migrant’s homeland might often be different in quality, space, and affordability compared to the host country. These conditions highly correlate to the level of income and expenses of the family and could vary greatly in different locations. South Australia is regarded as one of the most affordable and comfortable places to live in Australia (Sibenaler, 2014).

Another strong economic migration motivation for many study participants was to enjoy better housing. The living conditions of many ex-Soviet people were and still are inadequate in many locations. Study participant Leonid reported the awful conditions his family was forced to live in during his work in the research institute:

*Poverty, devastation. We were permanently living with two kids in one hostel-type room. This hostel was built in the 1940s. There was just one bathroom for all the families from all the 3 floors to share.*

(Leonid)

Similarly, another study participant described inadequate living conditions of his family at the time:

*We [a family with two children] had to share a flat with another family: we had two rooms in the three-room communal apartment with one [shared] bathroom and kitchen. (Yaroslav)*

In contrast, participant Maria reported she was lucky to inherit a flat; however, *“except for an old grandma’s sofa bed, our flat was empty”*, as the couple was not able to buy any furniture.

Up until the middle of the 1990s most of the housing stock in the USSR was owned by enterprises or federal bodies (Kosareva & Struyk, 1993). After the USSR collapse, legislation was changed to allow citizens to purchase properties; however, only by the 2000s did the housing market became functional (Gentile & Tammaru, 2006; Shleifer & Treisman, 2014). In reality, there were not many affordable properties in the urban centres within reasonable proximity to a university; and, as already mentioned, the low salaries of the lecturers and researchers, plus the absence of mortgage institutions, made buying a property out of reach for many academic families. Thus, low quality and/or unaffordable housing acted as economic push factors for many of the study participants.

### ***5.3.3. South Australian sponsorship***

On the brighter side, about one third of the study participants acknowledged that state sponsorship by the South Australian state government became one strong economic pull factor for their migration to South Australia. Prospective migrants were attracted to the state by the benefits of the South Australian government migration program, which were offered to new arrivals to make them feel welcome:

*I am sure the role of Immigration South Australia support was crucial [in our decision to settle in Adelaide]. No other state offered such an accommodation support program. (Nadia)*



Indeed, the “Meet and Greet” program of the government of South Australia in the 1990s had a number of free services available for those migrating to South Australia.

Participant Ludmila recounts:

*When we got more information about Adelaide, we decided: “This is the one”. Moreover, the state had an extensive migrant support program called “Greet and Meet” or so. Good quality free accommodation and support was offered and it seemed an ideal choice. (Ludmila)*

The services on offer included, but were not limited to, being met at the airport, subsidised temporary accommodation, job search assistance, useful information packs, and individual support of a volunteer to deal with some initial settlement issues, such as renting, schooling, shopping and navigating the city. Thus, participants reported the state government support played an important role during their initial settlement period.

To sum up, the findings demonstrated that economic reasons to migrate to Australia were quite strong within the study group of academics. It is believed they were pushed to leave USSR/ex-USSR country by important economic motives which meant they were unable to support their families and provide decent living conditions for them. For most study participants, the major push to leave the country was the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and its economic consequences; however, some participants who moved to Australia a few years earlier or 15-20 years later still reported economic instability as one of the strongest factors motivating their migration to Australia. It was also evident that the hope for a more stable economy and the migrant settlement support of the South Australian government were pull factors for academic migration

to South Australia, which support the neoclassical migration theories (Bauer & Zimmermann, 1999b; Massey et al., 1993; Todaro & Smith, 2012) and push and pull theories of migration (De Haas, 2010b; Kline, 2003; Portes & Böröcz, 1989; Schoorl et al., 2000; Zimmermann, 1996).

#### **5.4. Political motivations**

People could be forced to migrate due to different political issues, quite often because of a war or policies discriminating against certain categories of citizens (Castles, Booth, & Wallace, 1984; Radnitz, 2006; Weiner, 1995). The hostile political environment of the country and, in particular, issues of human and political rights and liberties, can cause people to leave their home country. Study data demonstrate that none of the study participants was forced to leave USSR/ex-USSR countries due to personal persecution, extreme violence or war episodes. Interviews with study participants, however, demonstrated that there were several political motives leading to a wish to leave the USSR/ex-USSR and settle in Australia. For these academics the most important political motivations were political instability in the country, nationalism, corruption and the limited freedom of speech and travel.

##### ***5.4.1. Political instability***

The USSR collapse in 1991 caused political and social instability that led to a number of internal conflicts in the 15 newly independent countries. The breakup of the USSR precipitated political tensions of the 1990s resulting in social unrest and disorder in most post-Soviet countries (Shleifer & Treisman, 2014). As a result, some people felt pushed out of the country. One of the most often reported political migration factors for migrant academics was the desire to escape from the post-Soviet reality and

politics. For instance, participant Kostya reported it was difficult to survive due to the unpredictability of what each day might bring:

*I felt bring unprotected, hopeless. I didn't see any leaders being able to steer the country. I was not happy with the constant turnover in the government. (Kostya)*

Admittedly, in the 1990s many people were feeling pessimistic and even depressed. In combination with the financial issues of everyday living described in Section 5.2, these factors pushed some academics to start looking for routes to migration:

*I also wanted to run away from fishing in troubled waters and generally from the political instability in the country at that time. (Ilya)*

It is surprising that a recent migrant and study participant Rostislav reported the situation in his ex-USSR country had still not changed much in comparison to the 1990s:

*We are in the period of unpredictability – no one can forecast what the [ex-USSR country] government would decide to do, what would it base its decisions on. (Rostislav)*

Study participant Alina, who moved to Australia in 2014, reported her deep disappointment and disillusion in her country of origin:

*Our government had failed to take major decisions about 10-15 years ago and that has finally brought the country to the current financial and economic crisis. I do not like where the country is heading. (Alina)*

Thus, one of the main motivations of many academics to migrate to Australia was to be able to work in a more politically stable country.

#### **5.4.2. Nationalism**

Another political reason to leave the USSR or an ex-USSR country was to escape the nationalism that rose dramatically at the end of the 1980s and continued to escalate after the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to Brass, “nationalism arises in response to objective exploitation of an indigenous group by an alien group, or of one social class by another” (Brass, 1991, p. 41). Soviet authority weakened in the most Soviet republics during the era of Gorbachev’s perestroika in the 1990s, so nationalism was gaining momentum (Juska, 1999; King, 2010). At that time, the widely popular desire of ethnic majority groups was to reconnect with their national roots (Hough, 1997; Juska, 1999). As a result, many Slavic nationalities living in a non-Slavic ex-USSR country were forced out of various positions at work and business (Radnitz, 2006). Study participant Ludmila reported that she felt she was not encouraged to live in her post-Soviet country, as she was of a different nationality to the majority of its nationals:

*In [ex-USSR country] I was nobody. It was difficult to live [there] in these times. Russians were looked at like enemies then. And I am Russian. (Ludmila)*

Likewise, study participant Oksana, who lived in one of the Asian ex-USSR republics before migrating to Australia, reported similar experience:

*After the ex-USSR disintegration, we found ourselves living in a Muslim country. Our family is all Russian. We don't have any other nationality in the family. (Oksana)*

Another study participant, Ruslana, recounted her family was not planning to migrate when she accepted an offer from a university to do her second PhD in Australia. She was a national of her country and not Russian. However, looking back she reported she would have migrated from [the ex-USSR country] in any case due to the rise of nationalism:

*Nationalistic movements had started there and another couple of years and we would have started thinking of migration anyway – but right at that moment I got the offer [from an Australian university]. So, we were not really planning to migrate, but actually did it just in time. (Ruslana)*

Nationalist movements in the USSR/ex-USSR countries were leading to necessary changes in the Soviet pattern of political power networks and economic resources distribution in the ethnically distinctive regions (Brass, 1991). The findings demonstrate the social changes were challenging for some categories of the post-Soviet population and thus nationalistic movements became one of the political reasons for some study participants to migrate from the USSR and ex-USSR.

### **5.4.3. Corruption**

Another political reason for the study participants to migrate from the ex-USSR was to escape corruption, bureaucracy and bribery. In the 1990s, economists and scientists defined corruption in Russia as “total” (Frisby, 1998; Heinzen, 2007; Martirosian,

2004). In 1999, the Deputy Prosecutor-General of Russia admitted that Russia was one of the ten most corrupt regimes in the world and that corruption in the country was one of the most destructive powers to the Russian nation-state (BBC, 1999). Not only was corruption (and even organised crime) a way of life to many public servants, but also a way to manage some universities and research institutions (Kupatadze, 2012; Osipian, 2009, 2010; Simis, 1982). Participants reported their awareness of these widespread practices in the USSR and that they did not support cultivation of these practices in their own academic institutions: *“All key posts were corrupted. It was the Soviet Union mentality – to get anything from the public service you had to pay them”* (Kostya).

After the fall of the USSR many higher education institutions were decentralised and privatised, which increased the scale and scope of higher education corruption (Osipian, 2009, 2010). The quality of the education in some universities declined and so did their reputation. Various forms of corruption were exposed in the post-Soviet universities, for example, bribery, cheating, plagiarism, research misconduct, embezzlement and extortion, abuse of public property, fraud, nepotism, cronyism, favouritism, and kickbacks (Osipian, 2009, 2010, 2012; Satarov, 2001; Shaw, 2005). More than that, degrees at all levels were reported to be bought and sold (Osipian, 2012). Against this backdrop of corruption, it was not surprising that some participants perceived the quality of higher education during the earlier Soviet period was far superior to the post-Soviet situation. Corruption at the post-Soviet universities was not one of the target topics of my study, so no specific questions were asked at the interviews. Nevertheless, many of the participants acknowledged the decline of the post-Soviet higher education standards, quality and institutions’ reputations and thus

corruption is considered to be a politically related push factor for some participants' migration to Australia.

#### **5.4.4. Freedom of speech**

Pluralist and democratic political structures and individual political liberties in the USSR were quite weak (Gibson, Duch, & Tedin, 1992; Kovalev, 2017). Traditionally it was not recommended by the authorities to discuss the issues of intellectual freedom, including freedom of speech, in the open for fear of being prosecuted (Sell, 2016; Van Voren, 2009). This fear was still imprinted in many intellectual families (Kovalev, 2017), so it was not surprising that the issues of freedom of speech were not discussed openly by the study participants. There was a history of political prosecution of a number of scientists in the Soviet Union (Froese, 2008), for example, the case of academician Andrei Sahkarov (Popper, 2013).

The study findings demonstrated that another important political reason for academics to leave their country was their wish to have freedom of speech and, in particular, autonomy and freedom of research and publication. As mentioned, academics did not talk freely about intellectual freedom, but I did obtain a few study participants' views on this. For instance, Ilya reported that, during his work in the USSR university, he felt he was being controlled even in his laboratory, where he dedicated himself to neutral and fundamental research:

*I left the USSR because in Australia I can do what I do best without worrying about being “politically” correct. (Ilya)*

Another participant Rostislav recounted that in the 2000s he was not allowed to research a specific scientific issue due to the university administration's point of view at the time:

*There were some specific difficulties - I was not allowed to realise myself [in ex-USSR country] as I dealt with ideas that were not popular in [in ex-USSR country], but they were quite popular in the West. (Rostislav)*

So, this study participant felt pushed out of the ex-USSR country to continue his research overseas. Indeed, Rostislav reported that many European universities were happy to have a Russian scientist on their books and thus he had an opportunity to professionally develop and progress in his specific area of research in Europe before moving to Australia. Overall, freedom of speech and publication was one of the political push factors in academics' migration to Australia.

#### **5.4.5. Freedom to travel**

For many decades the USSR was closed to the world and citizens' opportunities to travel overseas were rigorously restricted. Restrictions were a specific remedy to maintain social order and preserve the image of the USSR as a "communist paradise". Ordinary nationals were not allowed to see the reality or understand how people lived in other countries. Only those who were specially approved by the communist authorities were permitted to go to conferences or travel overseas, but were often accompanied by an undercover KGB escort (Matthews, 1989). On return, specially trained people instructed travellers to share only negatives of the life abroad, so that their stories would match the communist propaganda about life in capitalist countries (Buckley & Witt, 1990). There were also some practical issues with travelling overseas,



for example, obtaining foreign currency, as private ownership of currency was deemed illegal in the USSR. Furthermore, legal currency exchange amounts were limited and the exchange rate was artificially manipulated by the authorities (Katsenelinboigen, 1991). After the Soviet Union collapse, the situation changed and borders were opened for everyone; however, with the economic crisis that followed the collapse of the communism, most academic families were not able to explore the world as much as they wished and were still living in relative isolation.

Study participants reported limitations of travel opportunities as another migration push factor. For some participants the opportunity to visit Western countries was an eye-opening experience that motivated them to leave their ex-USSR country several years later. For instance, participant Nadia shared her memories of her husband's first visit to Germany: *"He returned shocked. He said we could live much better if we were not stuck there [the ex-USSR country]. So, we made our decision to leave the country"* (Nadia). Following this encounter Nadia's family first moved to Europe and then to Australia.

Furthermore, after 1991, people from other countries were able to visit ex-USSR countries and that gave rise to a number of exploratory business visits by overseas tourists. As mentioned, many academics did not have the necessary means to travel overseas, but were well educated and many of them could speak English fluently. Meeting people from Western countries and communicating with them in English about not only professional issues, but also many aspects of everyday living gave some of the study participants interesting data for analyses and comparison. In some cases this information pushed the academics into considering migration:

*When I started to work with Cambridge and Oxford and met my colleagues from there, I found myself bursting with curiosity. ... So, we have made a decision to migrate because we were so curious to see the world. It was interesting to try another life. No, we were not running away from any religious or cultural issues. (Inna)*

Galina was invited to work in Australia in 2011. She reported that it was her first and only overseas trip:

*I have never been abroad before. It was interesting [to go to Australia]. ... I wanted to see how people lived and how they worked there. (Galina)*

So, the collapse of the USSR and opening of the borders for ordinary people inspired some academics to move to other countries, rejecting the isolation of the USSR to embrace international experiences. Freedom of travel was another political push factor for many study participants to migrate to Australia.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that during the period of 1990-2015, ex-USSR academic migrants were motivated to migrate by a number of politically related reasons: to escape political instability, nationalism, and corruption, and to obtain intellectual freedom. These reasons were set in a context of economic decline in the USSR and the 1998 financial crisis in Russia on the one hand (Buchs, 1999; Saleem, 2009) and the authoritarian controlling regime on the other (Zubok, 2009).

## **5.5. Professional motivations**

The content analysis of academics' interviews demonstrated that their professional motivations to migrate were extremely strong, hence they are presented separately.

The findings showed that ex-USSR academics' professional reasons to leave their homeland and move to Australia were closely intertwined with – and thus difficult to separate from – previous descriptions of economic, social, and political migration factors. The specific reasons academics were keen to migrate were: access to information and resources, access to professional advancement and development, and global aspirations.

### ***5.5.1. Access to information and resources and freedom of information***

An important component of the USSR/ex-USSR higher education and research environment acknowledged by study participants was the lack of access to information resources. The right to hold, discuss and share ideas without being controlled and restricted in the USSR was governed in accordance to the 1977 Constitution of the USSR:

*In conformity with the interests of the working people, and in order to strengthen the socialist system, the citizens of the U.S.S.R. are guaranteed the freedom of speech, press, assembly and demonstration by law. (Constitution of the USSR, 1977, art. 50)*

Everyday routine, however, did not match the reality. In practice, most USSR people had very limited access to information resources and there were tough restrictions on the circulation of ideas, information, and publications (Kovalev, 2017). Any proposed piece of writing had to be approved by a specified censor or a licensing bureau that was exercising “ideological leadership” (Rezun, 1996); in many cases this resulted in publishing articles and books that were directly contributing to the preferred ideas and policies. As certain textbooks, books and journals disappeared from the public libraries in line with amendments to Soviet history, individual journal and magazine subscribers

were recommended to destroy politically challenging publications and those still in possession were threatened with persecution (Kovalev, 2017). It was dangerous to talk about anything without considering government ideology. The fear to state one's views openly had been with Soviet and ex-Soviet citizens for several generations, as the "fear of the authorities is virtually embedded into their DNA" (Kovalev, 2017, p. 10). It is likely that this fear might be the reason why most of this study participants avoided talking about this topic much.

After the USSR collapse, research and education institutions were allowed to have some internet access to information; however, information was still in the hands of the administration and usually researchers were not allowed to use it for networking and research. Study participant Yaroslav reported that in the 1990s their Academy of Science research institute laboratory had one computer:

*The head of laboratory said it [PC] was called a 'personal computer' for a reason, so it was kept in his office, behind the closed doors for his very personal use. And that was not a joke. (Yaroslav)*

Many study participants confirmed they had only limited access to the latest news of the science world, conference publications, journal articles of interest and other resources, including online access. There was "*no availability of information and funding. When I worked in Russia the situation was catastrophic, we could hardly get any*" (Leonid).

Researchers agreed that ex-USSR people and, in particular, Russians were still heavily dependent on the Soviet legacy in relation to the freedom of information access and distribution policies (Azghikhina, 2007; Dewhirst, 2002; Yakovenko, 2007). In fact, most ex-USSR principles and policies of data and information access were based on the

Decree on the Press of 27 October 1917 with only minor modifications in 1991. Thus, after 1991, despite the development of information technology across the globe, many ex-USSR scientists were often still not able to use many worldwide scientific databases: for some universities and research institutions subscription fees constituted a serious financial issue, and for many even organising a stable internet access was a hurdle (Ledeneva, 2006). For instance, study participant Lena mentioned that she had moved to Australia because of the absence of access to the latest information and knowledge in her discipline in her home country:

*I wanted to get deeper knowledge in business and management field.  
It is well-known in any ex-USSR country that if you want to develop  
professionally in this area, you have to look for the new methods and  
information in the West. (Lena)*

Freedom of research is vital to the advance of knowledge; it relates to the freedom of thought and the ways of sharing knowledge. Historically, in the USSR, scientific research was politically controlled to the extent that some scientific disciplines were banned because they were considered to be “bourgeois pseudoscience” according to the policy of the Party at the time (Nedelmann & Sztompka, 1993). This study’s participants reported they wanted to have an opportunity to continue their academic endeavours:

*I have always been passionate about my research. Back [in the ex-USSR] I did not have much choice of research topic, the projects were mostly pre-decided at the higher management/administration level, the only decision I could make was to work or not to on something*

*that was out of my interest. ... I migrated to continue working on my hypothesis. (Maxim)*

The situation slightly changed after the USSR dissolution, when ex-USSR scientists received more opportunities to participate in international conferences and to network with their overseas colleagues. However, participant Vadim referred to the strict control that he and his research team were subject to at an ex-USSR university shortly before he migrated to Australia in 2012: *“I could always feel someone standing behind me and giving me the orders: ‘Do this’, ‘Don’t do that’”*.

Over 20 years after the fall of the USSR, academics still felt that they were under persistent control of the university administration. Accordingly, during the communist era and the following post-Soviet decades, academics’ access to information in general and research topics in particular were under the control of the politically driven science administrators; consequently, it was often not possible to advance some schools of thought, projects or ideas. Even though study participants did not provide much information for analysis on this issue, it is evident that being under authoritative control and experiencing the lack of information resources had directly impacted participants’ academic work and practices at USSR/ex-USSR universities. Therefore, I conclude that the restricted access to data, information, and knowledge, and tight administrative control were professional migration motivations, which contributed to academics’ decision to leave the USSR/ex-USSR.

### **5.5.2. Access to professional advancement and development**

It is difficult to overestimate the value of professional development and keeping up to date with the recent developments in the field, to review and evaluate one’s own skills, and to discuss professional issues of research, teaching, and methodology with

colleagues and industry practitioners. The study findings demonstrated that participants were limited in their professional development opportunities in the USSR/ex-USSR higher education institutions, excluding such activities as self-reflection and random peer-observation. Study participant Ludmila recalled minimal chances to get some professional advancement and training in the ex-USSR:

*We did not have an opportunity to develop professionally there [ex-USSR country], you know. There was stagnation and degradation.*

(Ludmila)

Study participant Leonid reported a grim environment at his ex-USSR research institute: most of the research projects were put on hold, feelings of intellectual stagnation prevailed among staff, so professional development and advancement was not in the picture:

*When I worked in Russia, the situation was catastrophic. I could not realize any of my ideas. Slowly, the creativity was dying. There was no hope. (Leonid)*

Study participant Tamara also shared her memories of the optimistic expectations for the brighter future for research in the USSR and of the pessimism following the fall of the USSR:

*I had a desire to continue my research work. I had not finished it when it was all over [research institute was closed]. Science in the USSR – yes, there was a splash and nearly still water after. (Tamara)*

Not being able to develop professionally, as well as witnessing professional discipline knowledge dying and researchers leaving the country, made study participant Kostya lean towards migration to Australia:

*I was not happy at all that I was not developing as a scientist any further. I saw our ex-USSR scientists spreading around the world, and eventually there was no one to learn from in [my country] in my field, so I could not grow. I could not imagine myself in any other field – I wanted to be in [discipline] research. (Kostya)*

Similarly, another study participant made the decision to leave his institution and his ex-USSR country to continue his professional development:

*I left for Australia to continue my academic career before it was too late. ... And what a nonsense was that [ex-USSR country] PhD in [discipline] - there were no specialists in [this discipline] left in the country! (Alexey)*

Study data demonstrated that ex-USSR academics understood their need for professional development and were frustrated that there was no likelihood of obtaining it in their research institution or university in the USSR/ex-USSR. Thus it is believed that lack of academic development opportunities constituted a strong professional push factor to migrate.

Another side of professional growth and development was the decision to continue to be an academic. It was directly linked to the professional identity of the study participants. According to the study participants' interview data, the situation at work in their home country before their migration to Australia was extremely hopeless and,



for example, many scientists abandoned their profession. Study participant Kostya reported that, after 1991, “all fundamental science stopped, just died” in his ex-USSR country. Likewise, study participant Tamara reported her research institute ceased to operate and the staff was made redundant:

*I worked at a good research institute [in ex-USSR] and I had many friends and colleagues there; when it was closing down we were all in tears. That was the end of an academic career for many. (Tamara)*

The findings demonstrated that most of the ex-USSR academics had a strong motivation to continue their academic career outside the post-Soviet countries. Thus, the migration push factor identified above was primarily the limited opportunities for professional growth in the study participants’ countries of origin. On the other hand, a desire to remain an academic and be recognised as a professional in the discipline was a strong migration pull factor for many ex-USSR academics.

### **5.5.3. Global aspirations**

Under the USSR regime, not many academics were provided with an opportunity to share knowledge and findings with a wider circle of researchers from other countries; they were not allowed to attend discipline conferences of their choice, nor were they able to invite leading overseas scientists to their institutions to share knowledge and demonstrate their achievements. The situation improved with the fall of the communism in 1991, when some young scientists were able to get invitations to work or study in other countries. However, it was not easy to access this opportunity at times. For instance, study participant Yaroslav reported he was invited to participate in an overseas research project, but before he could accept this offer, his institution forced him to resign his academic position. Nevertheless, Yaroslav had an opportunity

to observe and compare research practices of his ex-USSR institution with an overseas university:

*After my two fellowships in [Western university] and a few overseas conferences I have realised that there was a different academic world out there and that I would like to become a part of it. (Yaroslav)*

The findings suggest that many academics who were able to secure work or a place in a postgraduate course overseas rarely wanted to return to their home country and actively looked for the opportunities to migrate. That is why about one third of the study participants migrated to Australia after they had an opportunity to work or study away from their homeland.

Overall, ex-USSR academics wanted a higher profile in their respective fields. Ex-USSR academics desired to have an opportunity to work at an international university and hoped for their contributions to the discipline would be acknowledged by their peers worldwide.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

The study data demonstrates that there were both pull and push factors that motivated migration of the ex-USSR academics to Australia. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and its consequences served as a strong motive for most of the study participants to leave their countries. It is evident that social, economic, political, and professional reasons to migrate were represented by mostly push factors, while social and environmental aspects of migration constituted pull factors. The desire to bring up their families in economic and political stability and to live in a cleaner, warmer environment strongly complemented professional reasons to migrate. Thus, the USSR/ex-USSR academics hoped that by changing their country of residence they

would improve their chances to continue working as academics, to be recognised as academics by their colleagues, to have possibilities to grow professionally, and to work in their discipline field without worrying about politics, nationalism or funding of their research. Prospects of greater freedom of research, easier access to information, technology and modern laboratory equipment were the most significant factors in academics' decisions to migrate to Australia; these issues are discussed in more depth in the chapters dedicated to teaching and research practices in Australia. Overall, economic factors were secondary to professional, social, and political motivations to migrate from the ex-USSR to Australia, which highlights the idea that migration is not only driven by economic factors (Castles, 2009, 2010; Castles et al., 2013; De Haas, 2010b).

It has to be acknowledged that decisions to migrate were reconstructed by the participants of this study after their move to Australia had already occurred, so some of their reasons might be seen as a retrospective justification of their migration. In addition, the recruitment criteria resulted in collecting a study group of highly skilled academic professionals who had succeeded in the Australian academy (this is discussed in Chapter 4 in more detail). The migration motivations of this professional group might be different from the motivations for the wider circle of the ex-USSR migrants and, therefore, might not be generalizable. However, most social, economic, and political migration motivations described above would typically apply to any skilled migrant from the ex-USSR. In fact, my perception is that the study findings might be applicable to many international academics of comparable ages and with similar pre-migration political, economic and social factors; for example, academic migrants from

the Eastern European communist-controlled countries, China and Vietnam are likely to share similar motivations to my study group.

## **Chapter 6. Settlement experiences**

### **6.1. Introduction**

Moving to another country and settling in brings challenges in many spheres of migrants' lives. This chapter provides an account of the settlement experiences of the study participants, drawing on the theoretical ideas of settlement and adaptation strategies discussed in Chapter 2. The analysis of these experiences is guided by Berry's (2005) theory of acculturation, which draws attention to the multidimensional and complex nature of the settlement process. Acculturation depends not only on the host country and its political, social, and cultural environment, but on many personal factors, including capacity to cope with the new environment, ability to handle emotional shock, and having skills to form new networks and relationships (Berry, 1992, 2005). Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 5, people's individual choices and their worldwide interconnectedness are important factors for migration (Castles et al., 2013); hence, the success of the acculturation in the new country also depends on the ways the host society is willing to accept migrants. Such factors as the level of dependence on family and social network support, level of education and previous economic status, international experience, and cultural background can sometimes also influence settlement outcomes (Berry, 2005; Berry & Sam, 1997; Cox, 1997). Time taken to settle depends on many factors and can vary enormously; however, there is a connection between the period of time migrants live in the new country and their successful settlement and adaptation in that country (Burnett, 1998; Shergold and Nicolaou, 1986; Taft, 1977, Richardson, 1961; Gray et al, 1991). Most participants report themselves as settled, which is taken as an accurate assessment

(defining the participants' level of adaptation and measuring it against a scale of life-satisfaction or self-esteem is beyond the limits of the study).

During the interviews participants talked a lot about their challenges of settling in South Australia, the first state to which most of them had moved as skilled migrants or postgraduate students, and most often with a family. Listening to and analysing participants' stories reminded me of Tolstoy's philosophical observation that "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p 1.); I see an "unhappy family" as an analogy of a migrant family that is yet to overcome a variety of challenges to settle in the new country. The interview data provided an opportunity to describe the settlement challenges of the academic families from the ex-USSR. In particular, the first part of this chapter will provide an account of the participant settlement challenges, such as culture shock, social isolation and a number of individual problems that migration introduced. The second part of this chapter will discuss strategies that participants applied to deal with the challenges of settlement.

## **6.2. Settlement challenges**

According to Berry (2005), acculturation is the dual processes of cultural and psychological transformation that occur when migrants adapt to living in a new country and thus are in close contact with the host culture (Berry, 2005, p. 698). Migrants use various strategies to adjust to the new living environment and Berry (2009) reminds us to expect this variety, as individuals from a similar culture might choose to use different acculturation strategies. As discussed in Chapter 2, psychological aspects of settlement are related to emotional wellbeing and satisfaction, while socio-cultural adaptation is about obtaining new social and cultural

knowledge, skills and experience (Berry, 2005). Following Berry's model (Berry, 2005), I understand settlement challenges as the combination of the processes of dealing with acculturation shock (Berry, 1992, 1997, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1994) and cultural learning (Ward et al., 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). The findings demonstrate that among the settlement challenges the most important for the study participants was to overcome culture shock and social isolation; there were also a number of individual challenges, for example, finding accommodation, family adaptation, English language and the issues of identity and belonging.

### **6.2.1. Culture shock in Australia**

Culture shock is an individual psychological reaction of a migrant to the necessity of adaptation in the host country culture to new experiences and new social imperatives (Adler, 1975; Berry, 1992, 2005; Taft, 1977, 1986). Culture shock experiences are often linked to the loss of social and professional status, and loss of the support of friends or relatives. Encounters with the new social-cultural environment may result in feelings of being rejected by the new culture, confusion in the new role, and doubts about self-identity, expectations and values (Austin, 2007). Migrants sometimes can be surprised and even feel anxious on realising the depth of cultural differences and struggle to cope with the new environment (Pedersen, 1994).

About a quarter of the study participants reported they had experienced culture shock on their arrival in Australia. For instance, study participant Yaroslav recounted his impressions that for some period after arrival in Australia he felt being *"scared and afraid"*, lost and helpless *"as a kitten thrown into the deep waters"*. Likewise, participant Ludmila recounted her fears: *"What if I don't understand a thing and will not be able to get a job in my specialty? ... How to get kids into a school and kindy?"*

*How the system works, where to start?*". Indeed, the differences between the cultures of the host and home countries might produce feelings of disorientation, anxiety and sadness; some people might feel regret (Cushner & Brislin, 1996; Schnell, 1996), insecurity, and "unhomeliness" (Bhabha, 2004; Manathunga, 2007). Another study participant reported that, despite careful preparation by reading about Australia, its culture and people, his expectations were inaccurate:

*I had a vague understanding of what to expect here [in Australia].*

*Sitting at home [in the ex-USSR] and reading Australian forums was too easy. ... Nothing was quite what I imagined. (Vadim)*

Culture shock affects "a person's world view, self-identity, and systems of thinking, acting, feeling, and communicating" (Brown, 1989, p. 128). This experience often challenges values and the foundations of personal identity (Thomas, 2001). However, even if not completely avoided, it can be minimised (Furnham, 1993; Ward et al., 2005). For example, participant Kostya recounted that his family was pleasantly surprised by the Australian reality on arrival:

*We were nicely surprised to see everything like that. Before leaving for Australia we met a woman who had lived in Adelaide for a while.*

*She told us horror stories about Adelaide and we imagined it was something like the Wild West. We met her later and asked her, why?*

*She said: "So that you did not have high expectation". (Kostya)*

In this way the culture shock for Kostya's family was reduced, though not eliminated. He further shared that for him the most stressful issue was living in the unexpected reality, so he specifically focused on understanding it: "*You walk this road and try your absolute best not to miss a bit – you have to note, take in, and absorb everything.*"



Remarkably, more than a third of the study participants, especially those who had worked overseas previously, acknowledged they understood that on arrival there would be some adaptation to the local culture needed:

*There is always a period when you have to find some common ground with new people. ... They have their culture, you come with your own. ... Yes, it took me quite some time to adapt. (Rostislav)*

Understanding this need intellectually and monitoring the emotional responses to the new environment might reduce the period of initial adaptation. It is suggested “once the shock in ‘culture shock’ is understood, it can be changed from a frustrating experience to a learning experience” (Schnell, 1996, p. 1). Many study participants acknowledged they had to learn to adjust to the people and way of life around them. For instance, study participant Sofia reported that she wanted to fully appreciate Australian culture:

*When I arrived in Australia I had read a book about Australia by one French author – she was really shocked first and then analysed everything and fell in love with Australia bit by bit. So, when I arrived in Australia, I was curious to know and understand what kind of a country was it? It reminded me of suggestions from the cross-cultural analysis course I taught [at an ex-USSR university]. We have to know how to understand other countries and adapt ourselves to be able to do business with them. (Sofia)*

To cope with new culture participants developed a range of strategies to deal with their experiences of culture (which will be described in section 6.2 below).

### **6.2.2. Social isolation**

Social isolation also is a challenge for migrants (Barrett & Mosca, 2013) and it can affect the progress of the settlement (Berry, 1997). Social isolation and stress are not just interlinked with an individual migrant's personality, skills and experience, but also depends on the host country's political situation and social environment.

Quite a few of study participants reported that when they moved to Australia they experienced feelings of social isolation and not belonging. Indeed, migrants arriving in the country often have few social connections. While some participants reported they were lucky to have had relatives in Australia or have established some contacts via online ex-pat forums, most often ex-USSR academics recounted they did not know anyone and it was not easy to get by without family and friends. For example, study participant Galina communicated her loneliness:

*I did experience social disconnectedness. I was all alone here [in Australia] – no friends, no relatives. Theoretically I could talk to my boss and his wife, they were from the same ex-USSR country, but they were not my friends and they were a lot older than me. So I had depression during my first year of working here. It was difficult to adjust. (Galina)*

Feeling social disconnectedness and in limbo for the first period after moving to a new country is within the limits of the norm (Barrett & Mosca, 2013; Cornwell, Laumann, & Schumm, 2008; Cornwell & Waite, 2009). Many study participants expressed the view that at the beginning of their Australian life they felt being socially isolated and had difficulties in finding friends. Some turned to the ex-USSR community for social

support, while others started a course at the university or TAFE to find English-speaking friends.

Participant Marina described she realised the need to build connections not only with international university students and academics, but with local Australian academics. At the beginning of her PhD study she was challenged by some Australian cultural values and worked on building her network:

*It was hard to adjust to the way that Australians behave, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. But you sort of get to know that. It was hard to find Australian friends just among Australians. They grew up in their neighbourhood, went to the particular school and then they just stuck together within their group. Whereas as a foreigner, you come, you are fresh, and then you stick with foreigners from school or somewhere else. So, mingling with Aussies - that was a bit hard. (Marina)*

She managed to overcome her social isolation eventually. Interestingly, Marina was the only participant who chose to be interviewed in English, which demonstrated she was confident in her social and communication skills.

In contrast, study participant Rostislav reported that he was happy to find himself in some social isolation, as it gave him an opportunity to concentrate on his own work by minimising all the communication that “*falls out of the research and teaching field*”. Apparently, this study participant deliberately chose a certain amount of isolation, reporting this even gives him some security:

*I am quite a withdrawn person, I am not really social. It might be strange for many people. Specifics of my work is that I need to think a lot. I am thinking about the research I am working on. I tend to do it on my own. My being so self-absorbed is a barrier to socialising with [Australian] people, I know. But on the other side – it does protect me from being ill-treated. (Rostislav)*

Indeed, there is no “one-size fits all” recipe for successful settlement. Yet, taking time and concentrating on the work priorities, such as research and professional communication with students and colleagues, can be an effective way to build professional bridges with Australian society.

Similar to Rostislav, participant Nina reported her isolation was because of her specific situation. Nina reported that she would love to return to Russia to work and live there permanently, but cannot not do so for family reasons; thus, she felt she was in limbo in Australia:

*I communicate with some members of the Russian community, but I do not feel myself part of this group. Most of the “Australian Russians” – they are united by the idea they all wanted to move here and most of them like it here. Most of them have been living here for a while and have found themselves and are quite happy. I don’t have all that. I don’t share their joy. I have never wanted to move to Australia and I would never like this country and the way of life here. I have lost myself here. I do not feel positively in any way. My identity is lost. I feel myself Russian and when I talk about Australians – I always use “they and their”, but not “we and our”. (Nina)*

Nina's realisation of her alienation pushes her into deeper social isolation. She denies the possibility of being happy in Australia and concentrates on demonstrating negative facts of her life here. Nina and her family have been living and working in Australia for more than ten years, usually sufficient time to become settled. However, Nina still has a limited social network, avoids participating in social activities and feels lonely. Unfortunately, the key to overcoming social isolation is interaction with the community (Barrett & Mosca, 2013; Cornwell et al., 2008; Cornwell & Waite, 2009). From the study participant pool, Nina is the only example of such self-distancing from her national community. In fact, she does not feel any necessity to become involved in the Australian community either, except in carrying out her duties as a university lecturer.

Some academic migrants from the ex-USSR reported that, in order to overcome their social isolation and homesickness in Australia, they applied a positive "can do" attitude right from the very moment of arrival:

*You've got your visa – just come here and this is your country. Trust yourself and be in control. Don't rely on anyone's help and everything's going to be OK. (Alexey)*

In brief, social isolation was another challenge of migration for some study participants. Findings demonstrated that the most useful strategies to deal with it were having a positive attitude, being self-confident, and resilient.

### **6.2.3. Individual challenges**

In addition to the settlement challenges described above, migrants often experience personal challenges. The obstacles, problems and difficulties in many areas of

everyday life that participants and their families had experienced during the initial stages of settlement are summarised below. In particular, participants were challenged by everyday routine tasks, issues of family members' adaptation, language barriers and the sense of belonging.

### **6.2.3.1. Everyday living**

One of the most frequently reported personal challenges was the encounter with different practices in everyday living. These challenges were mainly characteristic of those academics who arrived without a strong network of family and friends (that is the majority of the participants); this meant they had to rely only on their own previous experience, communication and research skills, common sense and also the generosity of the people around them. For example, participant Inna reported:

*When we were getting our visas in the Australian embassy in Moscow I questioned them: "Well, you have granted us this visa. Would you please provide some contacts or coordinates of people to talk to, to ask questions, or for some emergency?" I received rather an unexpected answer: "You have applied for the visa? Here it is. And, please, leave the office." So, we flew to Australia. Into nowhere. No-one met us. It was tough. (Inna)*

Similarly, participant Ekaterina recounted total disorientation following her arrival in Adelaide: *"I just did not have a clue – where to go and what to start from. I knew I needed a house and some help to find it. So I asked for help"*. Likewise, study participant Marina reported she could not properly research the accommodation options prior to her arrival in the absence of local experience:

*Finding a proper place to live in [was a challenge]. You don't know, actually, what a good suburb to live is, what the acceptable price to pay is, as you can get to know it only after some time. (Marina)*

Apart from accommodation problems, other issues were everyday shopping and public transport, some minor confusion in regards to driving on the left-hand side of roads, and problems with opening a bank account. In this regard, participant Yaroslav pointed out the challenges with banking due to ex-USSR people's financial illiteracy:

*We knew we had to open a bank account [in Australia]. There were several challenges though: first, we did not have plastic card money back in our country; second, we did not have any choice of bank account then and thus could not be familiar with various bank accounts' features. Also, for many years we had just one bank in the country - how would I know which bank I would like to choose?*  
(Yaroslav)

Interestingly, not many study participants reported they came to Australia being quite confident in their abilities and were self-sufficient in finding their way around:

*I have had an experience of living in Europe, moving to the USA, Kazakhstan. Facilities are different, but the logic is just the same. You know you have to get registered for taxes, open a bank account, rent a house, and find a telephone provider. So, we passed the adaptation period with flying colours. We also had [good] English – that made it even easier. (Sofia)*

Indeed, many practical everyday problems on arrival would be much easier to navigate if, prior to arrival, migrants had a good understanding of the first steps and knowledge of where to get practical suggestions and helpful tips. Two study participants reported they were lucky to have access to a comprehensive handbook that was emailed to international students; however, international university staff members could not recollect any similar handbooks sent to them. Hence, on arrival they had to rely on their common sense and the assistance of university colleagues and/or relatives. The “Meet and greet” initiative of Immigration SA (see Chapter 5 for more details) that provided skilled migrants with temporary accommodation and a volunteer to help with initial getting around, daily shopping and banking for the few first days was of undeniable value; however, not many academics were aware this support was available.

#### **6.2.3.2. Family and children**

It is widely believed that spouses/partners and children are a “taken-for-granted” group in Australian immigration and there are few studies with a direct focus on the experiences of spouses and partners (ASRG, 2011; Slonim-Nevo & Sharaga, 2000). Study data showed that another personal challenge of the study participants was the settlement of academic migrants’ children, change of roles in the family and employment for the spouse/partner.

Children feel some settlement challenges and cultural shock just as intensely as every member of the family (Bhugra, 2004b). They may not feel sufficiently protected by parents when they are at school or childcare. On the one hand, once at school, migrant children have to find some common language and their place in the culturally diverse class or group; and most of them arrive without any English. On the other hand, at the



settlement stage the role of school is to introduce children to the rules and practices of the rather monocultural Anglo-Australian school system. All this is often new to them, thus, they are likely to feel insecure. For instance, one participant reported that post-Soviet children found some comfort within their own national school community and formed a Russian speaking social circle:

*We sent our son to XX High School. It was the most popular school with Russian parents. ... Boys organised some Russian group, they didn't study, and they socialised within this group and completely lost contact with their Australian peers in the class. So, they had isolated themselves as they created a small community within a big school community. Chauvinism, nationalism, you name it. We [parents] and the school dealt with this [situation] and it faded out. But it took time. (Leonid)*

Indeed, while children also have to integrate into the Australian community, some can choose not to at the early stages of settlement. However, the example above was likely to have been a reaction to culture shock, which was successfully turned to learning experience by the school teachers.

While the interview data revealed that some students from post-Soviet countries struggled with settling in at school and learning English, the majority of children started feeling settled earlier than their parents. For example, participant Inna recounted:

*My five-year-old son was comfortable at school, his teacher was wonderful and he was talking and writing in English in about 3 months. Being a language teacher myself I could hardly believe that*

*such progress was possible. ... My son was absolutely happy [in Australia] - happy every day and every minute, as he was not aware of our difficulties and problems. He loved his school, loved the country and the sea, and did not want anything else. (Inna)*

Children may adapt faster than adults because of school activities that are aimed at team building and communication skills development. When communication barriers are reduced, children start to talk about themselves and learn about others, allowing them adjust to the new environment faster than adults (ASRG, 2011; Slonim-Nevo & Sharaga, 2000). Of course, all the family members had to adapt to the new country, not only the academics. Some families overcame the challenges by actively involving their children in the social life of the local post-Soviet community. For instance, Ludmila recalled she enrolled her children at the Russian ethnic school shortly after arrival, as it seemed *“the most logical thing to do”*. At the same time as some participant families were looking for the comfort of predictability in their communities, over a third of the participants reported that as a family they leant towards concentrating on learning about Australian culture and spending more free time building connections with the locals.

Some participants revealed a change in interfamily dynamics was another challenge. As families adapt to the new country, changes in roles within families can occur. Often it is the woman who is mostly in charge of the adjusting and rebuilding support networks for her family at the initial stages of the settlement (Boyd & Grieco, 2003; Espin, 1987; Gaetano & Jacka, 2004; Isaksen, 2010; Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa, & Spittel, 2001). The interview data confirmed that, indeed, often women dealt with the local social involvement, and men were more oriented to the internal family life. In

some cases, it destabilized the family: while one partner was excited building networks and establishing new contacts in Australia with growing independence and self-esteem, the other became more fixated on connections to the past life. Not surprisingly, this led to tensions within the family, adding to the settlement challenges.

Another family challenge was the employment or further study opportunities for family members. Of course, as mentioned, migrants' level of English would often define their access to study, employment and social life. Many participants reported that in general their spouses and partners had difficulties in finding professional jobs at the initial stages of their life in Australia:

*There were difficulties in finding jobs. It was not an easy process. My husband was hopping from contract to contract. Only once his resume listed quite a number of Australian employers, he got a more or less permanent position. (Ludmila)*

Finding their first job in Australia is a standard concern for any new Australian migrant because of the language, different work culture and unknown recruitment processes:

*There was a certain shock of how to find a job, prepare a resume... In [the ex-USSR country] we never looked for a job, we were always in demand. In Australia we would see hundreds of vacancies, we applied in desperation for all of them, and we were ready to do almost anything as we needed some income, but we never got any answers back. (Inna)*

A number of participants reported their partner's difficulty in finding a job in their professional area. Thus, the partner often had to change their occupation to be able to

take some more readily available jobs, which frequently were below their skill level.

Being aware of the situation in the local labour market, the South Australian government was keen to provide migrants with some job seeking information and some practical assistance; however, the access to this support and the awareness of its availability seems to be limited.

### **6.2.3.3. English language**

One of the most commonly reported challenges during settlement was the English language, a topic which ran through every aspect of the ex-USSR academics' settlement experiences, and was especially important in dealing with everyday living issues and employment. In the USSR learning foreign languages was treated by the communist government (and by the general public) as a luxury belonging to the aristocracy and bourgeoisie. More than that, in the USSR learning English has always been suspicious:

*People who studied foreign languages as their major subject as well as their teachers were also suspicious for they were potential spies, potential emigrants and/or potential cosmopolitans. They lacked loyalty and patriotism because they did not seem to be satisfied with their own language, culture, and country. (Ter-Minasova, 2013)*

Indeed, English was a language of the “capitalistic” countries, which were always considered to be “potential enemies” of the USSR (Pavlenko, 2003). Although the teaching of foreign languages was officially part of the compulsory curriculum in the USSR, in reality they were rarely actually taught. Compounding this limited opportunity, the prevailing attitude was that there was no need to learn foreign languages, especially English. Perhaps even more importantly, many believed that “the

cultural threat of the language was greater than the [...] benefits that its study might bring” (Adamson, 2002, p. 231). Despite this environment, some people in the USSR endeavoured to study foreign languages, most of them without hope of ever using them in practice due to the limitations on travel in the USSR. In general, English learners in the USSR and post-Soviet countries were usually skilled in reading and comprehension; however, most would find it difficult to talk and write academically, because the focus of the English classes was on developing students’ passive memory and reading skills (Mulholland, 1965; Ter-Minasova, 2005).

Predictably, then, issues with English language at the initial stages of settlement in Australia were reported by the participants. International academics would have come to Australia with a higher than a functional level of English, as every skilled migrant prior to arriving has to demonstrate a specific English level. Yet participants reported language issues as the biggest stress, impacting on all other spheres of their life. While just over half of my participants arrived in Australia with some international work experience, English was not necessarily the language of their work. In fact, only three had worked in English-speaking countries before their migration to Australia. Study participants recounted they were surprised to find that working in English in Australia would be a challenge.

Talking about this challenge, participant Lena reported her opinion that, to become a fully functional Australian academic, a period of language adaptation was necessary, because *“Academic English [in Australia] seems to be so different to what we were taught [in ex-USSR] and even though I was lucky to do the [program for international research students] here, it took me some time to adjust”*. Study participant Marina reported it was *“hard to get used to different pronunciation and different words”* in the

initial stages of living in Australia. Maxim also shared his impression that working in the English-speaking environment influenced the effectiveness of his work, as it brought “*a bit of a slowdown, kind of a brake was applied*”.

One of the often-reported communication obstacles for the ex-USSR academic migrants was the lack of self-confidence in using English. Thus, participant Ruslana reported: “*I was lucky – people did not pick on my mistakes, they either politely ignored them or corrected them. I have never really experienced language discrimination*” (Ruslana). During the interview participant Lada also shared her language difficulties:

*Yes, I had to admit that sometimes I did not understand, I had to ask [people] to repeat something. This was a moment of shame for me. Some people are good at listening and comprehending spoken language; however, to understand better I have to see it in written, for example. So, a proper comprehension of the speech took me quite a while. (Lada)*

It appeared that for many participants self-esteem was linked to how well they were able to speak English. Ludmila remembered her difficulties speaking English over the phone:

*We could not pick up a phone and call [government services] – we were afraid to talk over the phone for the first year or two, so we had to go [there] every time we wanted to find something out. It seemed we spent ages there. (Ludmila)*

Indeed, understanding how to communicate more effectively and escape the most obvious mistakes can take some time but is an essential part of the settlement

process. In short, all study participants acknowledged that having a good command of English right from arrival meant easier access to necessary resources like jobs, education, and entertainment; however, many participants had to improve their language skills. The findings demonstrate that being proficient in English is of particular importance in feeling confident and comfortable in the new environment. Without doubt, a good command of English is essential to the smooth adaptation to the new country; it is especially helpful in escaping the traps of isolation and possible alienation.

#### **6.2.3.4. Sense of belonging**

Another challenge for study participants was that by migrating to Australia they had inherited another homeland. Participants' responses to the questions about belonging to their home [in Australia] and "home home" [in their home country] provided a range of non-uniform views. Some study participants demonstrated that they actively rejected becoming a part of the Australian community, claiming they were "only Russian", while some highlighted they were "true-blue" Australians. The findings revealed that all the participants had developed a set of skills necessary to be independent and functional in Australian culture, while at the same time continuing to use their national language and follow cultural traditions.

Participant Vasiliy from Russia differentiates ex-USSR people into "Russians" and "Australian Russians". He is very loyal to Russia: *"I do not feel myself to be a member of the ex-USSR community – my soul and my heart are always in Russia"* (Vasiliy). In Australia Vasiliy avoids the ex-USSR community, apparently living in his own bubble: *"All my life is connected to Russia. Everything is there. I do not know any local news – ask me about Russia – I know all the news in every detail"* (Vasiliy). He also reported he

spent two-three months in Russia every year, lived “with Russia in his heart and mind”, and considered “Australian-Russian” to be a fictional, imagined community. However, Vasiliy stated he was quite happy to communicate with people of every nationality and thus had many Australian and some ex-USSR friends, although he claimed that when talking English he was thinking in Russian and then translating from Russian into English. While Vasiliy highlighted he was an ex-USSR migrant and a “Russian-bred” scientist, he also indicated he was an academic of an Australian university, a sportsman representing Australia, and a parent of Australian citizens and, actually, an Australian citizen himself. Indeed, interview data indicated Vasiliy was likely to have developed multiple belongings to adjust to this complex environment (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Vertovec, 2001).

Likewise, another study participant, Ruslana, demonstrated her sense of multiple belongings even though she claimed to feel like a typical Australian. Ruslana talked about distancing herself from the ex-USSR community in South Australia. During the interview she asserted there was nothing much that linked her to the post-Soviet Russian-speaking community:

*I am mostly out of touch with the ex-USSR ethnic community. Our friends are people we find it interesting to spend time with, there is no nationality factor there, but they are not from the USSR. Nationality plays a minimal role, practically no role, because we talk English freely. If there is no language barrier between the people, their nationality does not matter. (Ruslana)*

Ruslana appeared to be reluctant to talk much about her links to the post-Soviet community of South Australia, as she tried to represent herself as being independent



from her ex-patriots, their views and recreation activities. However, contradictorily, during the interview it was evident that she talked about the years spent in the USSR with a hint of nostalgia. In addition, Ruslana confessed she spoke Russian in the family, read Russian books, browsed the internet via Russian search engines and kept connections with her home country colleagues. Talking about her Australian life, Ruslana represented herself as a firmly settled migrant that had blended extremely well into Australian society. She reported she understood the unwritten rules of Australian culture and even knew *“what was right or wrong to do in an outback pub”*. While she might not be actively involved in the activities of the ex-USSR community, she maintains her home country culture within the family and indicated that Russian language, literature and software in Russian provided her with some sense of security and comfort; in addition, Russian was her choice of language for the interview. This study participant revealed her sense of multiple belongings; perhaps the interview had drawn her attention to the uncomfortable reality of her divided sense of belonging. Participant Rostislav reported that, after living abroad for some time, he felt he was different from the most of the Russian residents when he visited Russia. As a result, he defined himself as “a man from the USSR”:

*I am Russian, I was brought up in accordance to Russian traditions. I know, there is no USSR, but it still exists for me. I am a man from that Soviet Union epoch, I have not changed. When I visit Moscow, I see I am an alien there. Everything has changed – city, people, and the way of their thinking. So, everything has changed but me. Still I feel the USSR is my homeland. (Rostislav)*

In short, the findings demonstrate that, while some academics demonstrate they associate themselves with being only “Russian” or only “Australian”, most of this study participants maintain traditional home-country culture and language in their families alongside feeling part of Australian society and culture. This tension reveals their experiences of multiple identities and multiple belongings (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Vertovec, 2001; Vertovec & Cohen, 2003). The ability to “‘change skin’, to perceive oneself in a relational context” (Casal, 2009, p. 69), and to navigate cross-cultural differences effectively is an advantage that is especially useful in the context of the Australian multicultural environment and in the competitive global landscape of higher education.

Overall, the challenges participants encountered during their settlement in Australia demonstrate how the period following migrants’ arrival can be a serious test not only for the academic migrant, but for the entire family. The findings highlight the importance of managing issues of emotional wellbeing and possible feelings of confusion, helplessness and sometimes anxiety. Indeed, the lack of understanding how to react in a confident manner in different or new cultural and social situations is central to settlement and adaptation challenges. The findings also draw attention to the value of pre-settlement planning and the acknowledgment of the social and cultural differences.

### **6.3. Strategies of adaptation**

Migrants use various strategies to adapt and adjust to living in their new country. In the course of the settlement processes not only migrants, but also the host society members obtain new social and cultural knowledge, skills and experiences; cultural and social attitudes, values and understandings are likely to change through

interactions with different cultures (Berry, 2005). Interview data demonstrated that study participants were able to overcome a number of settlement challenges by using such strategies as building networks, getting involved in their ethnic community activities, and participating in the social and cultural activities of the host culture.

### **6.3.1. Building networks**

One of the key strategies to minimise the effect of culture shock and settle in the new country with fewer complications is setting up social networks with colleagues, relatives or even strangers (Haug, 2008; McKenzie & Rapoport, 2007). Six out of twenty-four study participants arrived in Australia having accepted a university job offer, so prior to their arrival they had established working relationships with Australian colleagues and university administration. For instance, study participant Rostislav reported he did not experience initial practical settlement problems because he had discussed all the arrangements beforehand:

*Well, I came here to work. So, I was met and accommodation was provided in King William Road, not far from North Adelaide. The University has even paid the rent for the first couple of weeks. My one way airfares were also covered by the university. ... So, there wasn't any special settlement program offered to me, but everything provided was well above my expectation. (Rostislav)*

Four other participants reported that a university representative or one of their new colleagues provided wonderful help on arrival. This help was not limited to meeting the migrant family at the airport, but extended to assistance with opening a bank account, finding accommodation and assisting with children's enrolment at school.

Study participant Galina described the generosity of her Australian boss in taking time to help her:

*My university laboratory manager organised everything. They found accommodation for us beforehand. I was not worried. ... They helped me with banking, transport and other stuff. (Galina)*

In general, though, assistance from the employing university itself was very irregular and often depended on the individual decisions of the faculty or school managers and general goodwill of workmates. Some study participants that had received assistance from university colleagues on arrival seemed to take it for granted: *“because they [Australian colleagues] have been living here for a number of years – they know it all”* (Galina), not factoring in the time and emotional energy investment of their workmates. However, those who did not get any support from the university managed successfully by relying on themselves and their networks beyond the university.

Three study participants reported members of their extended families already living in South Australia provided a considerable advantage on arrival: they had an opportunity to tap into their relatives’ established network of friends and neighbours. A number of study participants reported finding online contacts and making friends in South Australia via social media. They were able to build on this communication, so they could rely on useful advice and contacts on arrival. They reported the opportunity to talk to real people who live and work in Adelaide took some burden off their shoulders. Also, all study participants acknowledged the importance of regular communication with their overseas families and close friends for psychological support.

In summary, the findings confirmed that establishing networks before arrival in the host country is a way not only to reduce settlement challenges of physical and psychological discomfort (Boyd, 1989; Light, Bhachu, & Karageorgis, 1993; Massey, 1988; McKenzie & Rapoport, 2007). In addition, networking after arrival in Australia helps to make new friends, build relationships and social connections and to engage with people of diverse opinions and practices. Not everyone, however, had the luxury of an established network or relatives' support in Australia on arrival; many of these newly arrived academics turned to the ex-USSR/Russian community with the hope of rebuilding their social connections that had been lost in migration.

### ***6.3.2. Ethnic community support***

Becoming a part of the already established ethnic community of the host country is potentially useful for newly arrived migrants (Haug, 2008). Quite often study participants reported that Russian community members were in an excellent position to understand the needs of the new arrivals and to help build social networks. The ex-USSR academics tended to rely on the Russian-speaking community social network particularly during the first few years of living in Australia. This confirms findings of Ward and Styles (2005) who argue that formation of new friendships and participating in community events is a significant component in rebuilding social networks in the receiving country during the first post-migration years

Many participants reported that they relied on the ex-USSR community support for useful information on everyday life: some recount invaluable practical help community members provided in their free time, and cherished the opportunity to be properly understood. For example, participant Lena talked about expanding her network to include more Russian-speaking people from South Australia:

*After my first year of living in Australia I have realised I have an internal need and motivation to communicate with the ex-USSR people. Communicating with Russians is a completely different experience, it involves deep understanding of each other in comparison to mostly 'surface' contacts with Australians. ... I cherish the time I can spend talking to Russians. Now I enjoy the company of ex-USSR people, I seek to spend time with them. Every Russian-speaking migrant has suddenly become a very interesting person to me. (Lena)*

Indeed, understanding is often easily achieved with people with a similar upbringing and early life experiences, so that hues and undertones of shared meanings are understood in full. Furthermore, participant Inna emphasised the importance of maintaining Russian-style communication and traditions:

*We carry on old traditions celebrating Christmas and Easter in accordance with the Julian calendar. We talk to other Russian families [in Russian] and they are closer to us. ... We respect Australian traditions and our Australian friends, but we have our traditions, and these are the ones we grew up with, so we cherish this special festive atmosphere and memories with our relatives and friends, who can really relate to that. (Inna)*

Inna acknowledged that her “otherness” was not an ongoing challenge to her everyday life and that she had made many Australian friends in academia and beyond. Study participants agreed that there were different ways to practice and preserve Russian culture and maintain a social Russian-speaking network in South Australia. In this

regard, study participant Lada, who migrated over twenty years ago, reported she considered herself still to be part of the Russian culture:

*I am an active member of the Russian cultural association “Let’s talk together” and the Russian Theatre. I am in touch with many SA ex-USSR academics, not as professionals, but just as people. Well, I do not classify Russian people as being academics or not. I find interesting people among Australian Russians and keep on communicating with them. (Lada)*

Some study participants have reported they were closely connected to the homeland community for the first few years of their acculturation in Australia; however, once settled they felt little necessity to be specifically connected to it. For instance, participant Ludmila reported that she was in desperate need of contact with Russian culture for the first five years of living in Australia; however, in time her attachment to Russian culture changed:

*I was tied to my culture until I realised that I am a part of the Australian culture. So when I got the sense of integration, when I felt “I fit”, I stopped taking my family out to the Russian community regularly. The moment I realised I am self-sufficient here in Australia – I lost interest in the Russian community. ... No time, no interest whatsoever. (Ludmila)*

In much the same way, study participant Nadia reported she had a number of Russian friends and acquaintances at the beginning of her Australian life and these connections seemed important to maintain at that time. About five years post-migration Nadia noticed she had cut off most of her communication with the Russian community:

*I feel no desire or draw or grief or longing or regret that I do not have time to talk to them or see them. Just absolutely nothing. I would even say I feel somehow above the Russian community. (Nadia)*

Indeed, many participants demonstrated that they have gradually lost contact with their ethnic communities after having adapted to the host country. In general, the post-Soviet migrant community of South Australia is composed of a relatively small but very diverse and multinational population; many of its cultural, national, sport, and special interest groups are fairly disconnected. Yet, this migrant community is united by the Russian language and the USSR culture and history, which influences the sense of belonging and identities of these migrants.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that in the initial stages of settlement academics were poised between the lives of an ex-USSR migrant and an Australian academic, but many progressively moved away from the Russian community. The majority of the participants call Australia home; however, many of them acknowledged their “otherness” in relation to their sense of belonging to both their homeland and Australia. Feelings of “otherness” in both countries points to the multiple identities experienced by many migrants. The findings also reinforce that academic migrants, similar to non-academic migrants, experience gradually losing contact with their national community over time when living and working in Australia (Carrington, McIntosh, & Walmsley, 2007).

### **6.3.3. Other social-cultural activities**

Getting involved in activities beyond their ethnic community was another strategy participants employed to settle effectively. Participation in various social, cultural and sport activities assisted migrants in developing new contacts, friendships and the



feeling of belonging, consequently becoming part of Australia's multicultural society.

The most often reported activities were exploring South Australia and other states and getting involved in study and/or sports. Indeed, one of the pull factors for the academics' migration to Australia, discussed in Chapter 5, directly relates to the lifestyle and environmental motivation factors.

Many reported recreational and sporting activities could be classified not only as of healthy lifestyle, but also social activities. For instance, study participant Vasiliy reported his involvement with one of the sport clubs and the benefits of the members' support:

*I joined the club next day [after arrival] and I am still playing for Australia. ... I did not have any settlement problems – I just picked up the phone and called my [...] club members – they gave me directions and helped in everything. (Vasiliy)*

Indeed, meeting new people through sport and exercise is an effective way to create a new social circle.

Studying is another activity that offers opportunities for social interaction and understanding the new culture. In fact, over half of the study participants had undertaken some further studies in Australia at various levels – ranging from short-term courses to PhD or Master's degrees. Study participants mostly undertook postgraduate courses that were linked to their professional interests; however, some hobby courses were also reported, for example, craft, art classes and sky-jumping. For some academics embarking on a university course of two years (or longer) was one legal way to meet Australian immigration requirements and become permanent residents of Australia. Taking shorter courses was either a recreational activity or a

practical necessity, as it was for study participant Alina. Alina was required to complete an Advanced Diploma in her narrow field of medicine to meet the specific requirements of the Australian registration board before practicing in her field.

In brief, educational courses were practiced to gain some further specialised knowledge, to develop professionally or for personal development. Studying in Australia enhanced their understanding of the way tertiary education institutions operated from the student perspective, which is likely to have enriched their teaching practices later. It is thus not surprising that many ex-USSR academics created their current circle of friends from people that they met by chance along the way, who are not always Russian-speakers. Therefore, undertaking study or taking up sport or other recreational activities operated as a productive strategy to learn the culture of the receiving country and build new social networks. This in turn can alleviate culture shock and eliminate social isolation to some extent. Participants also mentioned travelling around Australia as a way to see, know and understand Australian people and culture better. The social and cultural issues pertaining to academics' professional activities will be addressed in Chapters 7-10 that are specifically dedicated to academic work.

Overall, participants used several strategies to manage their settlement process in Australia. Some families relied on their formal and informal networks and the support of the university, relatives and ethnic communities, while others actively built bridges across multicultural communities. Such tactics as development of social and communication skills and improving thinking agility (that is, applying creative thinking, problem-solving behaviour and avoiding negative thinking traps) has been found in other research to be effective for non-academic migrants as well (Luthans, Luthans, &

Luthans, 2004; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). As mentioned, most of the participants stated they had already settled, hence, it confirms that by using the practical approaches outlined above they were able to adapt or adjust to working and living in Australia.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

Not surprisingly, migrants often experience difficulties adjusting and adapting to the realities of the new country (Furnham, 1993; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Sam & Berry, 2010; Zhou et al., 2008). The findings confirmed that study participants arrived to live and work in Australia with their own imaginings of the life in Australia and that these expectations were not always met. In order to settle, academic migrants and their families had to overcome a number of challenges, including dealing with culture shock, social isolation, everyday living issues, insufficient level of English and the issues of belonging. To overcome these challenges participants used various strategies to learn more about Australian culture and lifestyle, to build networks and to make new friends.

The findings revealed that the tension of belonging to two homelands simultaneously and feeling “other” persisted despite the fact that most participants reported themselves as settled. Indeed, on the one hand, many participants have integrated into Australian society remarkably well and adopted many of its values. On the other hand, the majority of participants maintain their national language at home and participate to varying degrees in the social and cultural activities of the ex-USSR community. Admittedly, most participants have developed a sense of multiple belonging, which is impacted by their individual experiences, relationships and environment.

The experiences reported here are consistent with Berry's (2005) acculturation framework, described in Chapter 2. More specifically, ex-USSR academics' approaches corroborate the features of Berry's integration strategy, according to which migrants develop a relationship with the host country societies while simultaneously maintaining their own culture (Berry, 2005). This integration strategy is underpinned by the multicultural migration policy of Australia, which is designed to support cultural diversity and pluralism, assuming that "culture is enriched by diversity rather than polluted by it" (Ozdowski, 2013, p. 4). Indeed, migration brings benefits both to individuals and to Australia by enhancing its human capital through new skills brought by migrants and enriching it through increased cultural diversity (Carrington et al., 2007). Migration introduces changes in the host society, promoting the spread of new ideas and organisations, and generating new ways of thinking and cultural evolution (Richerson & Boyd, 2008). In the period of globalisation, migrants are the markers of the local social change processes that feed into global social transformations (Castles, 2007a). Therefore, the findings of this case study can have broader implications, demonstrating that settlement is a complex and multidimensional process, which can lead to different changes at the individual level (Berry, 2005). Part II of the thesis will address professional issues of academic mobility and migration, such as academic career trajectory, teaching, supervision, and research and collaboration experiences.

## **PART II: ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIC MOBILITY**

### **Chapter 7. Academic career**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

As might be expected, academic migrants from the ex-USSR confront many unforeseen challenges relating to their university employment in Australia, including making sense of their expectations, understanding the new university culture and fitting in to the new work environment. The data from the participants' interviews revealed that significant personal and professional adaptation is required when international academics move universities. These findings support the discourse on the challenges of the personal and professional changes of the international staff in the university employment settings of EU, UK, Canada, China, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, and Australia (Cai & Hall, 2016; Da Wan & Sirat, 2018; Hoare, 2013; Kreber & Hounsell, 2014; Kuzhabekova & Lee, 2018; Metcalfe, 2017). Analysis of the specific experiences of the ex-USSR academics in Australian universities contributes to the deeper understanding of the international academics' encounters at work and their career trajectories in the multicultural academy of an Australian university.

#### **7.2. Learning about the new university workplace culture**

The data demonstrated that most of the study participants faced similar challenges once they started to work at the Australian university. These challenges did not depend much on the specifics of their discipline, the breadth of their academic experience or the mode of their recruitment. Clearly, the participants' accounts demonstrated that they had to deal with not only integrating into the workplace (Ackers, 2010; Bauder, 2012; Maadad & Tight, 2014), but also with specific challenges, which are related to the participants' background (described in Chapter 3). Arguably,

the distinctive characteristics of the USSR and post-Soviet education system and culture influenced participants' expectations of the new work environment and shaped their original understandings of the Australian university environment. Several challenges have been identified: meeting Australian university expectations, new workplace induction, employment stability, collegiality, and perception of international academic staff by their university colleagues.

### **7.2.1. Expectations of the new job**

During the interviews participants talked about their expectations of their new job in Australia, some of which were not met. Post-Soviet academics reported they assumed that the traditional hierarchal structure of the university and its organisational principles were quite similar in both Australian and USSR/ex-USSR systems of higher education.

In the USSR/ex-USSR participants were obliged to manoeuvre within the general environment of strict bureaucratic and hands-on management, tight intellectual control, authoritarian use of power, and highly politicised policies of the education institutions (Kuraev, 2016). In contrast, in an Australian university many participants experienced a relative absence of interference from the university management. For instance, participant Ludmila commented on the differences between the systems:

*Here [at the Australian university] – I was expecting the same working relationship, like bossing me around and hierarchy, you know. There is a difference here. ... I am surprised, how much easier it is to work here. Students respect you and they are kind of at the same level as you are, they call you by name, but at the same time, there is*

*a certain distance as well. It is not mateship, but they are not afraid to ask your opinion or to have their own. (Ludmila)*

Working at an Australian university she was not firmly commanded and controlled by the university administration, which was noticeably less officious and intrusive than at her previous university. Similarly, participant Vadim compared his ex-USSR and Australian university working environments and reported he enjoyed working in Australia: *“I love that no-one is standing behind me and watching what I am doing [in Australia]. No one is giving directions ‘Do it this way’ or ‘Don’t do it’”*. Clearly, some aspects of the Australian university culture have exceeded the expectations of many study participants.

In contrast, the findings demonstrated that some participants’ expectations were too high. For example, Vasiliy, a well-known ex-USSR professional in a very narrow field of science, reported that, after accepting an invitation to continue his research in an Australian university, he assumed that he would work on his own terms. He imagined he would have a few assistants and total freedom to choose methods and the agenda of his own research projects. However, he realised that the overall direction of his research had to be adjusted:

*I had to do some different science here. I am grateful I did now, but then I had to survive and I had to publish something [in the new field]. I did not enjoy doing it for many years on, even though we started getting research grants. (Vasiliy)*

Vasiliy’s previous academic work at a Soviet university was severely constrained by political, bureaucratic and often economic interference; he imagined that the Australian experience would be the opposite – working in a free and truly democratic

country, with minimal limits on his academic freedom. After moving to Australia, Vasiliy realised he had misinterpreted the limits of his anticipated academic freedom and thus he had to fine-tune his expectations as an academic to work in the new context.

As might be expected, study participants with international experiences outside their home country had more realistic expectations about their new job in Australia. For instance, participant Yaroslav, who had prior experience in a Western university, reported that right from the very start he looked for opportunities to publish and present his research: *“Whether my previous academic experience was recognised or not – no one would actually push you to prove or demonstrate it. However, I knew my level. ... I had to write many articles.”* Yaroslav’s international academic experience informed his understanding that on moving to Australia he had to re-establish himself in the academy. A number of other participants mentioned their expectations to be able to attend international conferences more often whilst working in Australia were accurate.

Overall, academics’ first months in the Australian university may or may not confirm their initial expectations of the university culture and practices. The data demonstrated that most ex-USSR academics, irrespective of their discipline, would be working hard to re-establish themselves and demonstrate their worth to new colleagues. This confirms findings of other scholars that most international academic migrants would be in a similar position irrespective of their background and nationality (Da Wan & Sirat, 2018; Hosein et al., 2018; Kinchin et al., 2018; Maadad & Tight, 2014).



### **7.2.2. Induction and orientation**

Universities offer new staff induction and orientation programs, which are usually understood as “formal and informal practices, programs, and policies enacted or engaged in by an organization or its agents to facilitate newcomer adjustment” (Klein, Polin, & Leigh Sutton, 2015, p. 263). These programs could be at different levels and are often not culture specific. The university-wide inductions are often provided online, but might be supplemented locally by face-to-face follow-up with a line manager or supervisor, which is often substituted by peer support (Sutherland, 2018). The induction is intended to be structured training giving academics an overview of the most important university practices, though, in reality it varies greatly from school to school and from discipline to discipline.

Most participants reported their account of the local, rather than university-wide, induction. One referred to a teaching induction and one to a supervisor induction. The findings demonstrate that participants expected a university induction to reduce their uncertainty and anxiety and help them become oriented in their new environment. Unfortunately, more often inductions were described by the participants as “hit and miss”. For example Vadim recounted his impressions of the induction:

*Besides fire safety some operational questions were discussed. My supervisor showed me where everything I could need for lectures was. I was also shown how the printer works and how to switch the microphone on and off. The university also provided a sort of checklist with the links and some instructions for dummies. There even was a field to tick the items off. ... Also few things were not mentioned at all, as they did not think they were important enough for new staff. I*

*had to search the university website to find this information myself.*

(Vadim)

Vadim shared his impression that his previous academic experience would not be trusted. On the one hand, this sort of induction might be reasonable for a novice who has never been in an academic position before. On the other hand, for an experienced academic, completing detailed check lists might be considered quite demeaning. Furthermore, responding to what looked at first glance similar to the USSR impractical, incoherent, multiple checklists and bureaucratic forms seemed to this study participants quite invasive, but yet so familiar. In a way, this induction exercise resonated with his experiences of the controlling practices of the ex-USSR university administration and thus was regarded with a certain disapproval.

The findings show that inductions were often either too general or too narrow and specialised. Surprisingly, over half of the study participants from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics areas reported their induction was focused on occupational health and safety issues. For example, Lada demonstrated awareness of the different levels of inductions at her workplace: for students, visitors and academic staff. However, all of them were specific to the safety rules:

*We should know how to use, dispose, store, and quarantine. There is some radioactivity and chemicals reagents as well. So, a proper induction is critical. It is very helpful and useful. It might be of different levels, depending on the purpose and length of academics' stay [at the school] though. (Lada)*

It is essential to introduce the main principles of working at university laboratories from the very beginning to avoid safety issues. However, knowledge of these principles is not enough to make an academic understand the new role and performance standards in order to fit in at the new workplace and meet the expectations of the school administration. Not surprisingly, some participants reported that their inductions were not useful and felt like just another bureaucratic exercise of minimal value. Many ex-USSR academics explained that their induction programs did not include orientation to performance expectations, career development options and promotion procedures.

It was also evident that some participants on casual contracts were not given any induction or orientation at all. In particular, participant Nina recounted: *“Induction? What induction? I am not permanent, I have been on the contract since 2008. I have a contract for just one term. And then I sign another for the next term, and then another.”* So, having worked for the university for nearly a decade, Nina still perceived herself to be an outsider who was not much valued, promoted or supported.

Similarly, participant Lena first came to Australia as a visiting academic for one year, so she was not recognised as a new staff member. She reported she was not offered any induction, although, due to the nature of her temporary appointment, she was directed to undertake some of the regular “staff” activities:

*When I was a visiting academic, I did not have any induction. Well, the school was responsible for me and thus organised my participation in all the meetings. So, I took part in school board*

*meetings and I also attended school seminars to get some insights into the academic side [of school life]. (Lena)*

In this way Lena was provided with an informal induction into the school.

Only one participant mentioned a compulsory induction into Australian teaching methods and practices. Marina recounted that a two-hour compulsory program she attended covered a broad range of topics, for example, “*how to encourage a conversation among the students, how to handle tricky situations.*” However, in her view, it was too general:

*It was very theoretical. Well, I do understand that they got together the best practice from different “brains”, but, you know, in the classroom different situations can occur and sometimes they do not follow the book. So, look, maybe it was helpful for somebody, but I found it to be 50% useful. (Marina)*

A general, but worthwhile induction experience was reported by Inna:

*I was introduced to the school, its aims and values; my role was clarified; I was given details of where to go if I have problems, who to contact for specific operational issues – everything was explained to me so very well – I guess I was just lucky with the team that had experience of working with “international background” employees before. (Inna )*

Inna’s face-to-face induction was conducted by the school coordinator or manager, who was aware of what the needs of a new colleague might be. This induction was an

infrequent opportunity to get an insight into the university culture first hand, but was a rare case and not the experience of most of the study participants.

Furthermore, study participants reported that initially they encountered some operational complications in their new job, which could have been easily anticipated by colleagues. In particular, some academics reported they wasted time locating copy rooms, printer and fax facilities, toilets, staircases and options for after-hours access to their office. Getting business cards and even a staff ID card were not straightforward processes either.

Overall, finding one's way in a new job takes time, but a good induction and orientation can considerably shorten this period. Thus, inductions could be an important mechanism for introducing new staff members to the operating systems and local culture of a university. The findings demonstrated that there is a need to extend the scope of the inductions by including more information about staff development, expectations, promotions, conference participation and travel arrangements, as well as providing an option of an informal tour of the school premises with an introduction to the colleagues. This can help new international staff to feel welcome, informed and supported from the very first days at the new workplace (Bauer, 2010; Edgington & Swiatek, 2018).

### ***7.2.3. Experiences of casual and fixed-term employment***

Experiences of casual and fixed-term employment in Australian universities have been discussed extensively over the last two decades (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008; T. Brown et al., 2010; Marginson, 2000). The majority of academic positions are casual in many universities of the world (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; May, Strachan, Broadbent, & Peetz, 2011; May, Strachan, & Peetz, 2013; Norton & Cakitaki, 2016). The

perceptions of the study subjects are relevant to the ongoing debate on jobs casualisation in Australian higher education.

Some study participants reported a concern that the work conditions at an Australian university were not as favourable as they had expected. In the USSR/ex-USSR universities academics were traditionally employed permanently and many worked for one university all their lives; hence, most of the ex-USSR academics were not really exposed to the practices of temporary, short-term employment. In contrast, study participants with previous international experience reported they were aware of this trend. In Australia, academic employment is very competitive, new positions are not often created, and the majority of the academic workforce is employed under fixed-term arrangements (Andrews et al., 2016; May et al., 2013; Norton & Cakitaki, 2016).

Participants shared their perceptions that the casualisation of academic work had resulted in brain drain from the South Australian universities to other states or countries. They believed casualisation had laid the foundations for a low level of job security. In particular, Lada reported her general concern that there were not many prospects for academics to work in South Australia:

*Look at South Australia: there are not many opportunities here for academics and researchers. There is not much funding available for research, equipment and technology. Most early career researchers are not permanently settling here, they prefer moving to bigger cities and [jobs with] higher work security. Here [in her specific field] a maximum contract is just one year. (Lada)*

In fact, casualisation is a known issue across the whole Australian university sector and is not specific to South Australia (Norton & Cakitaki, 2016). Having acknowledged

participants' perceptions of the low job security that casualisation brings, it is important to highlight that job casualisation, on the other hand, significantly contributes to brain circulation between Australian universities and the rest of the world by creating an additional need to be mobile. Similarly, many study participants reported being upset about the fact that South Australia is losing many academic jobs. Study participant Marina reported she believed funding was the cornerstone of all the issues:

*It all comes down to available funds. Recently [the Australian] government has cut the research funding to South Australian universities, which meant that lots of people had to be casual, and so a postdoc position would not be an option any more. ... So, you have to move somewhere, where it is still there. Australia has become really competitive in the academic job market. (Marina)*

Indeed, to get an academic job in Australia one has to compete with applicants from all over the world. However, some academics from the ex-USSR countries still win these positions and are invited to work for the Australian universities, only to discover that there are not many options for getting a permanent position or tenured position. In this regard, participant Ruslana expressed doubt whether international academics would be seriously considering Australian positions in the near future:

*I am not really sure a specialist would accept a contract for one or even three years. An internationally recognized professional, who has a good academic position somewhere else, would not consider leaving his place for a short-time contract. (Ruslana)*

On the other hand, study participant Vasiliy reported his view that it was still worth being academically mobile. Signing even a short-term contract might be fruitful for an academic career:

*This luxury of working by yourself [at an Australian university], with no one above you, cannot be compared to any salaries. So, one should try to come to work here. Even a one-year contract might work for you, but you should be able to demonstrate what you can do and show results. (Vasiliy)*

Vasiliy articulated that initially he was invited to work in Australia as a project-based researcher on a short-term contract. Enjoying his academic freedom, he successfully progressed to a position as tenured professor. Importantly, this is an exception, rather than the usual career progression trajectory of the 2000s. Indeed, in this time of globalisation of higher education and the rise of academic mobility, one to three-year contracts have become quite common in Australian universities (Bexley, James, & Arkoudis, 2011; Norton & Cakitaki, 2016).

#### **7.2.4. Collegiality and information sharing**

Another challenge that study participants reported in the new workplace culture was difficulty in understanding collegiality in Australian universities. Collegiality is a structure for planning, decision-making and follow-up procedures (J. Bennett, 1998; Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). It can provide individuals with an opportunity to practice “academic citizenship” (Bolden, Gosling, & O'Brien, 2014) that affirms the values of respect for the other, truthfulness, deep attentiveness to differences, and openness to authenticity (Nixon, 2004; Sennett, 2003). Ideally, collegiality allows university management to share responsibility for decision making with academics and



reach a consensus in an atmosphere of trust and respect of the professional individual opinions (Burr, Collett, & Leung, 2017; Donohoo, 2016).

Some study participants reported they were pleasantly surprised by the Australian emphasis on collegial governance and culture. Traditional Soviet ideas of “one-man management” and the prevailing “relations of subordination” conventionally informed relations between academics at the USSR/ex-USSR universities, thus seeking “collective opinion” was not common (Yanowitch, 1985). Study participant Maxim was surprised when he noticed the collegiality at an Australian university, instead of the more hierarchical relationships between colleagues he had observed at the USSR universities and abroad. Maxim compared Australian collegiality to the collegial governance he experienced at an American university, where a professor was the key figure:

*I have just returned from a contract in America. There is not much difference in the research practices [between America and Australia], but there is some in the way of the organisation. ... It seems in Australia they try to develop some collegiality. I cannot say if it is bad or good. In my view – mostly bad, as academic freedom is being reduced at the expense of getting funds [for the research]. ... In America the professor had the resources to do and organize everything to his own liking. His research direction did not depend much on the university. (Maxim)*

Maxim had spent over ten years in the American academy and just two years in an Australian university, so he noticed these differences with relatively fresh eyes. It is interesting though, that his observation correlates with the current debate about the

degree of participatory democratic decision making in Australian universities. Some academic managers controversially assert that in a modern university collegiality and democratic consultations may be counterproductive (Kirkby & Reiger, 2014; Lafferty & Fleming, 2000; Thornton, 2015). In the Australian context, collegiality may overlap with ideas of “mateship”, helping university colleagues to create and maintain positive and respectful professional work environment that is critical to the overall success of the faculty and the well-being of the university staff (Brundrett, 1998; Marginson, 2000).

Information sharing, a key aspect of collegiality (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016), is very different in Australian and ex-USSR university cultures. In many instances Soviet organisational culture was based on the principles consistent with the authoritarian and highly politicised environment of the country. Typically, people in post-Soviet workplaces had a tendency not to share information, even if they did realise that sharing it would be in everyone’s best interests. People who felt themselves powerless developed strategies to become door-keepers of critical information and resources.

Besides, a general atmosphere of distrust caused employees not to share information even with their colleagues due to the fear of losing credit for their own work. Taking responsibility for making decisions based on the information available and making a mistake was another fear, as a mistake could be personally costly. Not surprisingly, knowledge in the USSR/ex-USSR was regarded as power and thus was shared purposefully and with selected key people. Furthermore, this way of sharing information and knowledge is still identified as one of the key characteristics of the Russian business culture (Andreeva, 2015; Volkov, 2007).

In contrast to the selective knowledge sharing culture in the USSR and post-Soviet states, study participants found a range of open information sharing practices in Australian universities. For instance, this culture surprised study participant Tamara:

*At this [Australian] institute there was a rule in place: if you have a know-how, you are to pass this knowledge over to whoever needs it. So, it was a must to share your skills and knowledge. It was a huge shift from the Russian culture. "This is mine. Only I know how to use it. I am not going to tell anyone. If you need to use it – go and study it yourself, I am not going to waste my time and do your work", that was a domineering rule over there [ex-USSR]. (Tamara)*

Tamara worked for an Australian university whose members had already established understanding of the benefits of information sharing. Without doubt, time is necessary to develop this shared understanding. Tamara reported no one explained that sharing what you know and being open to the ideas of others was one of the unspoken rules at her new workplace. Understanding of the workplace culture, values, and know-how is mostly experience based, embodied in people and is linked to the context (Botha, Kourie, & Snyman, 2008; Eraut, 2000; Von Krogh, Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2000). This understanding is also often hard to communicate effectively (Gamble & Blackwell, 2001; Wellman, 2009). Luckily, Tamara was able to tap into the tacit knowledge of some of the laboratory peers. Soon she was successfully collaborating on the use of new equipment with many faculty members as she realised that she should not be afraid or ashamed to ask for information.

However, not everyone shared their knowledge with her. To Tamara's great surprise, people from the Soviet bloc countries already working at the Australian university still

blocked the information flows and were not inclined to share their practices or knowledge:

*It was much easier to ask somebody of an English-speaking background about certain equipment, rather than going to my Russian-speaking colleague to listen to his "excuses" why he didn't want to explain anything to me. An English-speaking colleague would calmly and friendly go through the procedure or show how to work with the thing. (Tamara)*

A few ex-USSR academics were reported to be still following their old Soviet habits of holding onto the information to their own advantage, denying oneself and colleagues the opportunity to exchange useful skills or ideas. This confirmed that their resistance to sharing knowledge was not discarded by some ex-USSR academics after they moved to Australia.

It is plausible that habits like not sharing information can become very ingrained in some individuals and, when one is challenged and required to change those habits, the associated sense of possible identity adjustment or change may be very unsettling. Therefore, while many ex-USSR academics develop a sense of collegiality and cooperation with their Australian colleagues, some still behave as if they are in an oppressive authoritarian culture. The post-Soviet background and previous individual experiences do not alter some researchers' habits of deliberately avoiding the sharing of knowledge.

Overall, most study participants welcomed the ideas of Australian collegial principles and relationships, acknowledging their value in contrast to their previous experiences when the same aspects of collegiality were used as an ideological tool, tightly linked to

the management and bureaucracy of a Soviet university (Barabasheva, 1979; 2014; Kern, 1981). The origins of the fixed mindset of some Soviet and post-Soviet academics are derived from the controlling authoritarianism of the USSR system, that has integrated into broader, more enduring Soviet cultural practices and is not a unique feature of the education field.

### ***7.2.5. Perceptions of migrant academics by their peers***

Public discourse in Australia frequently refers to migrants taking Australian jobs. For example, ongoing newspaper rhetoric about thousands of skilled migrants on temporary work visas is fuelling debate about the value of permanent migration and reinforcing ideas that migrants come to Australia to jeopardise work opportunities for the locals (Ting, 2016; Masanauskas, 2013; 2017). Australian employment law does, indeed, stipulate that in employment migrants are to be treated equally to Australian citizens (Fair Work Act, 2009). Nevertheless, real experiences of international academics in the workplace may not perfectly align with the rules. Every participant in this study is a migrant and some of them are aware of perception among their university colleagues that academic migrants are stealing local university jobs. It is important to note that the perspectives as offered by the interviewees might well be valid, but, equally, they might not be justified.

Less than a quarter of study participants experienced a cold and reserved attitude towards them at times, which they interpreted along the lines of “the local academics not being happy the overseas ones have been employed again”. Study participant Leonid, who initially struggled to get a place at the Australian university, but has since successfully reclaimed a leading researcher position, assigned the difficulty of being adequately promoted to this stereotype:

*Australians are strategically stopping overseas researchers from promotions and limiting professional working places for them. I see it as an Australian defence reaction to the well-educated migrants from overseas. ... There is a difference in attitude to an academic migrant and a local researcher. They [locals] tend to minimise options for [overseas academics'] promotion. (Leonid)*

While Leonid might be correct in his assessment of local attitudes, there may well be other forces at play. For example, Leonid could have imported some attitudes or prejudices from his previous overseas workplace. It is impossible for us to know from the interview data whether his slow career progression was caused by his own personal qualities or the prejudices of his colleagues.

Talking about promotions, successful academic employment and collaboration, participants voiced some reservations in regard to what they refer to as “the Anglo-Saxons”. By this term participants appear to mean the descendants of the dominant white middle-class majority that initially begin European settlement in Australia. Study participant Yaroslav reported his view that employers give preference to the local Australian candidates:

*However, whether we want it or not – Anglo-Saxons are still a little bit better than the rest [of the Australian population]. Just look through the listings of some top figures, you will see the trend. ... There are some exceptions, of course. Whether you like it or not – they [Anglo-Saxons] were the first to colonise Australia and if there is an “equal competition” out of the two the Anglo-Saxon would win it. (Yaroslav)*

Remarkably, Yaroslav's point of view echoes that of a number of study participants. Participants' observations are not surprising, considering that historically British and Irish settlers have always been the backbone of multicultural Australia (DHA, 2018b) and the fact that the two most common ancestries of the Australian population are Australian and English (ABS, 2016). Indeed, only in higher education, out of 40 Australian university vice-chancellors, 85% had an Anglo-Celtic background and 15% had a European background (Soutphommasane, 2015). Indeed, participants' observations confirm the results of the one of the few studies on the biases in employment in Australia, which found that labour market discrimination did exist across different minority groups from culturally and linguistically diverse background existed (Booth, Leigh, & Varganova, 2012).

Furthermore, participants commented that at the university they often communicate with other international migrants formally as professionals and often informally, sharing their settlement and integration problems. For instance, one participant reported she noticed she was mostly collaborating with academic migrants at her university:

*I would say we are not collaborating with Anglo-Saxons though. It's strange, isn't it? A. – is Italian, another author is Chinese. My lab assistant – from Germany. It looks like immigrants are with immigrants. They understand each other's problems better or just stick together because they are migrants, I'm not sure. (Oksana)*

It is quite clear that the university school Oksana is working for is multinational; however, the reasons why the researchers prefer not to collaborate with "Anglo-Saxons" are not obvious. Participants' observations leave us wondering if the

international academics from the ex-USSR are deliberately being passed over for promotion because they avoid collaboration with Australians of British descent or if it is a result of the historical circumstances in that particular time and place. Immigrants preferring to communicate with each other may project their feelings of otherness and provoke a certain alienation from their “already naturalised” university peers. In this regard, the data confirms the sense of “being alone” reported by the international academics that moved to UK universities from different countries (Kreber & Hounsell, 2014). While some participants’ observations may contribute to the discussion about the groups of established, colonising “Anglo-Saxons” versus all other “newcomers”, this debate is unfortunately beyond the limits of this thesis.

Overall, the ex-USSR academics’ expectations of their new university position vary and are influenced by each participant’s cultural background, work and international academic mobility experiences. These expectations are often disrupted by the lack of understanding of the university culture and how the new system works. The findings demonstrate that the induction and orientation programs provided to the participants often highlighted occupation and health procedures and rules pertaining to dangerous goods handling. Disappointingly, aspects of the university culture, such as collegiality, information and skills sharing, and some practical orientation to the relevant discipline were usually overlooked. Hence, some participants have associated poor induction with ignoring the potential value that they were about to bring to the new school. Inconsistent university “onboarding” (Klein et al., 2015) procedures demonstrate, on the one hand, limited university resources and, on the other hand, missed opportunities to welcome a new university member and exchange knowledge with him/her. The data also affirm other researchers’ findings that casualisation of the



academic profession remains an important issue that is linked to job insecurity, lower wages and unfavourable working conditions for the international and local academics (Kimber, 2003; May et al., 2011; May et al., 2013). Clearly, a new academic staff member cannot be expected to be able to fit in immediately (Boice, 1991; Bönisch-Brednich, 2014; Kreber & Hounsell, 2014; Kribernegg, Maierhofer, & Penz, 2014); rather, new employees continue to learn on the job and in social situations with new colleagues.

### **7.3. Adjusting to the new university workplace**

When the expectations of moving into the new workplace are not met or met only partially, we see different responses. To fit in at the new workplace, some participants used strategies and methods that had proven effective in USSR or post-Soviet universities; others primarily focused on understanding the cultural differences, adjusting accordingly to adapt to the new university environment; some choose to do nothing. About one third of study participants reported an “easy fit” with the new environment, and a quarter reported they took some time to adjust to the new place of work, while a small number of participants reported they had not yet adjusted or provided no comments. This section discusses the participants’ approaches to fitting in, and, in particular, their ways of demonstrating value to the new university, and how they understand adjustment to the new work environment.

#### ***7.3.1. Demonstrating one’s value and potential***

One of the reported strategies for coping with unfulfilled expectations and challenges of the new work environment was to demonstrate one’s value to university colleagues. Gaining credibility and respect from colleagues involved not only maintaining research and teaching, but also being able to contribute to the social and collegial life of the

school by volunteering, organising seminars and participating in social life. For instance, study participant Lena reported that, when she applied for an academic position at an Australian university, she was rejected because her PhD degree, completed after 1991 in a post-Soviet university, was pronounced not valid. Thus, she applied for an Australian PhD degree course to start all over again. At the very beginning of her course she was informed that she would need to obtain additional funding. So, having found herself unsupported and unfunded, Lena did not abandon her PhD plans but turned to her previous post-Soviet experience. She reported she had never applied for a grant before, but theoretically understood that to secure a grant for her research project she would have to find the necessary contacts and establish a working relationship with the relevant industry bodies and an Australian government department:

*To get my grant I had to publicly demonstrate my project, present it to the industry and the state government; prove that what I am doing and how I am doing makes sense; prove that I am able to set the goals that are worth going for. Add to this academic publications, collaboration and necessary discussions with colleagues. (Lena)*

Notwithstanding the fact that Lena had recently arrived in an Australian university, knew little about the system and had few established networks, Lena managed the grant application successfully. Thus this study participant's experience demonstrated the adaptability of the ex-USSR academics and the ability to work through in a situation of "blocked horizons" (Castells, Caraça, & Cardoso, 2012).

Another demonstration of the academic migrant's potential and value was through maintaining or enhancing their international standing in the discipline. These

academics had researcher identities that were relatively independent of where they were based. Study participant Rostislav demonstrates this strategy. Collaboration with his Australian colleagues resulted in the offer to work in an Australian university. Rostislav reported his credibility as a scientist in Australia was established in the course of the effective team work on the project. During our interview Rostislav stated he was proud of his achievements in Australia:

*My theoretical contribution has been acknowledged by the Australian project group. Their work is more practical and my part is the discovery and description or the analysis of the likelihood of discovery of the new [xxx]. Representing Australia I went to the world's biggest theoretical conference in my discipline and have already written a number of interesting papers. (Rostislav)*

Rostislav's experience highlighted that working on an international joint project can lead to employment opportunities in another country. Previously Rostislav had focused on his own research and publications; however, in Australia he had to learn to teach and supervise students. Similarly, several other academics reported they also made an extra effort to learn how to supervise students in Australia (further discussion of this issue will appear in Chapter 9). Importantly, what is assumed to be a standard academic practice in Australia might not be the same in the participants' experiences. Historically, teaching and research roles were often separated in the USSR, so many of the study participants had limited experience in one or the other.

The findings demonstrate that the ex-USSR academics took some time to prove themselves not only to the international academic community through excellent research, but also to local staff by dedication to teaching and supervision. The strategy

of demonstrating value is one of the most common approaches to becoming a respected member of the Australian academy.

### **7.3.2. Social interaction with colleagues**

Another strategy that ex-USSR academics used to adjust to the new workplace was by socialising with the new colleagues. Such interactions revealed the differences between cultures and provided a clearer perception of the new university organisational environment.

Socialising with colleagues was mentioned by many participants as a very important activity that gave insights into everyday university issues, school culture and the way things were done here. However, not everyone understood this at first. Participant Tamara reported with a certain regret and disappointment that, at the beginning of her academic career in Australia, she did not mix socially with her colleagues and realised a decade later she should have:

*I would have spent more time socializing with my colleagues. Well, for example, a coffee break. I should have gone out with my colleagues to have a cup of coffee together. But I did not go, because I was absolutely sure my experiment was much more important. I could have rescheduled the experiment or just stopped it, but I wanted to prove to the others that I can work well. (Tamara)*

Looking back Tamara realised that her colleagues not only loved their jobs, but also felt connected and most likely enjoyed spending time with each other. Tamara ignored this laboratory culture as she did not understand it. Instead, she came to the university to work and thus she followed her work ethic. Not surprisingly, her understanding of

being a “good worker” was based on unspoken ex-USSR rules, according to which a “good worker” had to spend more time at the work place (overtime was encouraged) and minimal time talking to colleagues. So, for Tamara spending time socializing at work was a violation of ingrained Soviet rules. She recounted: *“Yet, I have run into problems. I was under the impression that I was doing everything right, but people around did not think so and got really critical”*. Clearly, her colleagues saw the situation from their own perspective and did not understand, for example, why she needed to work alone at the lab after hours. Similarly, a few other participants reported it took them time to realise that their new Australian colleagues thought differently.

Another social communication issue that some participants reported was critique of their performance at work. Generally, in close-knit workplaces, like a university laboratory, the members are encouraged to critique openly and constructively in informal as well as formal ways (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). Of course, most people are comfortable with cheering on a colleague and providing some positive comments, but there is some unease when delivering negative feedback. It is often recommended the constructive feedback is provided as an open discussion about what works well and what needs attention or improvement (Beamer & Varner, 2001).

However, participant Galina reported a different practice:

*They [local colleagues] are always smiling, like everything is OK. It appeared that in reality they secretly reported to the management that I was not doing much at work. However, I was doing everything they asked me to do. As it turned out, I had to do much more, but I was never told about it and I did not know. That was really frustrating – no one explained [the duties], but yet I was expected to*

*carry them out and was watched and talked about behind my back.*

(Galina)

Similarly, participant Tamara reported she did not know if it was appropriate to talk to anyone about the job expectations, performance and culture. A combination of poor communication, absence of a proper induction, and, likely, the lack of training to provide appropriate feedback in the workplace, it took these participants a long time to understand and adapt to their new role and workplace culture. Informal social interaction play an important role in helping new employees to deal with the performance feedback and develop a sense of belonging to the new work environment.

Informal conversations with their colleagues also proved difficult. Different expectations of the depth of such conversations seemed to be an obstacle to effective communication at work. For instance, participant Lena reported her perception that an informal communication at the Australian university is often more “*structured and is less intimate*” in comparison to the post-Soviet workplace:

*[There is] clarity and certain crispness [in the Australian communication]. Also, there is an absence of real emotions, extra words, and a loss of energy. ... Their [Australian] communication might be more cheerful, people smile a lot; however, they do guard their words. I see it as a certain communication protocol. In my view, you understand Australian culture when you know communication protocols for certain situations. (Lena)*

These comments do indicate her recognition that she did not yet understand the language conventions and was struggling to identify between the sugar-coating and

the real message. It takes time to obtain understanding of such unspoken conventions, particularly in providing negative feedback. Again, the period of adjustment could be shortened and the stress level could be reduced if there was some training available. Unfortunately, participants reported that no cultural competency training was in place at their universities. This supports the view of Maadad (2014) who claimed that lack of cultural awareness and the absence of cultural training program, in Australian workplaces make the work settlement of the international academics more stressful. Some participants, especially those who had previous international academic experience, indicated they had minimal difficulties in formal and informal communication in Australia. For example, participant Rostislav, who had a solid experience of working for many international universities, demonstrated his awareness of the importance of social interactions with his colleagues and, hence, was prepared to deal with it. Notwithstanding the fact that he was a “lone wolf” by nature and by his research practices, Rostislav knew he had to talk to the people around him. He reported he initially limited his communication to the minimal necessary, but later found social interaction became a part of his routine weekly activities:

*Of course, my communication is not limited to professional topics only. We often have lunch together, sometimes we dine out. So, we talk about very different things, not only talk shop; we discuss politics, what's happening in Australia and the world. (Rostislav)*

Social interaction of participants with their work colleagues is important for new academics' adjustment in a new university. Established social connections at work not only help new academic staff understand their roles, performance expectations, and the workplace culture better, but can encourage exchange of opinions and reduce the

stress of adaptation. Therefore, the process of fitting in to the new academic environment should not be an individual challenge of the international academics: it must be a shared effort between the international academics and the higher education institution. This corroborates Berry's (2005) ideas of migrant acculturation as the process of mutual adaptation of two cultures (discussed in Section 2.5 of Chapter 2). In this regard the issue of the quality induction, discussed earlier in this chapter, and cultural competency/awareness training of the university staff are of paramount importance.

### ***7.3.3. Adopting new university practices and values***

Another strategy of adjusting to the new university workplace environment is to fine-tune previously used teaching, supervision and research practices and adopting the new university values. While many study participants reported that they made an effort to adjust to the Australian context, two participants reported they resisted assimilation into the Australian academic culture.

While the initial interview transcripts showed that two participants claimed they did not adopt any new practices nor values in Australia, the more comprehensive analysis of their data demonstrated that they actually had adjusted their practices to be able to work at the faculty alongside their colleagues and were seen as successful academics by their Australian peers. For example, study participant Nina disclosed that she considered herself to be socially isolated at the workplace and still did not understand how things worked. She also shared her feeling that her *"Australian university was not interested in what I could give"*. Nevertheless, in order to teach international students effectively she had to understand the Australian university teaching style and adapt her own to fit:



*So, I just do my work well. I do not tell anyone, that I use “my” elements in the lectures and give students “my hints” at tutorials. I try to keep everyone happy. However, I do not like what I am doing and will never like. I do not like working here, in Australia. (Nina)*

Thus, Nina was teaching Australian students by applying her own values and some of the post-Soviet methodology, focusing more on her students passing assessment tasks successfully and less on developing student’s critical thinking and learner autonomy. The data demonstrated Nina knew well enough how the system worked (“*If you are not sharing ‘their’ values, you might not get the job*” (Nina)) and had her casual employment contract extended every term. The data also revealed that Nina was skilful in keeping her university administration, colleagues and students happy, hence, she had adjusted to the new working environment in her own way. In fact, Nina has been working for an Australian university for about ten years and can boast of plenty of grateful students.

Another study participant, Vasiliy, also reported that he did not need to adapt to the Australian university environment. Vasiliy emphasised that he was only a temporary academic here in Australia and could return to his post-Soviet university at any moment. Vasiliy was convinced that his Australian university environment did not influence his way of doing things and thinking. However, his successful career in the Australian academy indicates otherwise: he worked for three Australian universities during his 20 years in Australian academia, he won a number of Australian research grants and obtained a professorship. Moreover, he represented Australia for many years at international conferences and sporting events, which indicated that Vasiliy had adapted to the Australian culture reasonably well.

Most study participants agreed it was important to understand what values were shared at the university school to start adjusting their expectations and practices accordingly. Study participant Lena summed it up in the following way:

*When you are in the new university environment, you have to adapt to the system. You have to get the understanding that you are being accepted, your skills are acknowledged; you have to be certain you are doing things in tune with others; you have to be sure you are performing well. You have to ensure you are moving in the right direction. (Lena)*

Every migrant's perception of the new work environment is different, so the time necessary to understand the new culture does vary. However, the period of adaptation could be shortened if a special attention is paid to each newly employed international academic and their induction and orientation included practical and useful material about university culture and pedagogy.

Overall, during the first months (and sometimes years) of working in an Australian university many ex-USSR academics had to put an extra effort into becoming valued members of the Australian academic community. Their response to the new workplace environment was primarily about adopting Australian university values, adapting their teaching practices and utilising their research experiences to do their job well, which will be discussed further in Chapters 8, 9 and 10.

#### **7.4. Career trajectory: disruption or progression?**

Many of the study participants shared their thoughts about the influence of their migration on the progression or disruption of their academic career. Most of the participants' self-assessments are quite positive, demonstrating an unusually high

satisfaction with their career progression. It is important to acknowledge that these results are not representative, as the study participants' pool was limited to the ex-USSR academics who have been employed by a South Australian university; consequently, academics and researchers from the ex-USSR countries who were not successful in getting an academic job are not included here. As mentioned above, the majority of participants reported the continuity of their careers after their move to Australia; however, in many cases progress and promotions were delayed.

Despite the majority of positive reports, there were two participants who did report their academic career was totally disrupted by migration. One academic, Nina, had migrated to Australia involuntarily and that triggered a series of negative experiences for her:

*My career was terminated in Australia. I am still in the field of [xxx], but what I am doing here is not related to my previous career in Russia anyhow. Not relevant at all. (Nina)*

This academic confessed she could not find a suitable professional space for herself in the Australian university system, wished to concentrate more on theoretical research than on teaching. However, she admitted she had not tried hard enough to pursue her research interests in Australia. Instead, she had prioritised her family. Therefore, the career advancement dissatisfaction is mostly linked to Nina's personal choices and lack of motivation, rather than to any specific difficulty in achieving a position in pure research.

Another study participant, Nadia, who reported total academic career disruption, had initially let go her academic career temporarily for the sake of providing for her family when they migrated to Australia. However, since then, she tried to get back into her

“old academic shoes” by studying and researching at an Australian university, but has not yet completed her postgraduate research degree. Still, Nadia stated that to fulfil herself academically, she was contributing as a freelancer to an international online research collaboration. In this study Nadia was the only person who was a research degree student, but worked outside academia with a salary that she “*could not complain about*” at the moment of interview.

Most of the study participants indicated they were able to maintain the continuity of their career development after their migration to Australia. Four ex-USSR academics who had moved to Australia as family members and without a job offer from any Australian university, reported they had experienced hard times finding a job in the academy. For example, it took Ludmila over 8 years to return to academia; when she finally succeeded, she was overexcited:

*I was in research and in [xxx science]! It seemed to me that I was doing nothing in the laboratory – just having fun! ... Wonderful! Loved it! Travel, work, publications and study and even salary! I was pinching myself – was it true? (Ludmila)*

Some study participants had to step down the academic hierarchy ladder to get into the Australian university system. Some successfully regained their academic status, some less so. Participant Ilya remembered he was strategically placed at the bottom of the academic ladder, but he knew it was temporary:

*I was quite happy with my colleagues and was getting the satisfaction from my work and being able to work creatively. ... They [Australian colleagues] realised, I guess, that professionally they*

*needed my expertise. If they did not need me, why would they invite me to Australia to work and “dance around me” so much? (Ilya)*

Ilya's value to the faculty was evident to many, so, not surprisingly, he was promoted quickly and in two years has reached his ex-USSR level as the lead scientist of his faculty. Ilya explained that this strategy was initially suggested by his Australian professor, so that the local Australian academics would not be offended by “*an international academic jumping into the leading positions out of the nowhere*” (Ilya). This promotion strategy confirms the perception of some local academic colleagues that international academics are “taking their jobs”, discussed in section 7.2.5.

In contrast, participant Leonid moved to Australia as a family member, without an existing academic job offer. He found it difficult to enter the academic labour market. Notwithstanding his successful academic career in a post-Soviet research institute, it took Leonid nearly a decade to get to the same academic level he was at prior to his migration to Australia:

*With all my knowledge and degrees, I had to start [in Australia] from the laboratory technician position. And step by step, step by step. People working with me started to realise that they did not know what I knew, and that they need this knowledge. .... Finally, when I came to work at the [South Australian] university, from the research level B I was promoted to the top grade shortly after I applied for my next patent. (Leonid)*

It was not surprising that this participant chose to get into the university system at whatever level he could because Leonid recounted he felt like “*a fish out of water*” when outside academic environment. A number of study participants reported that, in

order to support the family at the beginning of their Australian life, they had to accept any available positions in research, regardless of whether these were closely or not really related to their field of expertise. Later, Leonid realised that this pathway had broadened his horizons:

*My previous experience and knowledge have found a new application here and that has pushed my career forward. ... If I were in Russia, I would never be able to get to the level where I am now. (Leonid)*

Another study participant, Alexey, commented that, once he had accepted his first academic position in Australia, his career quickly took off. He believed there were more opportunities and interest in his particular research field in Australia than in his ex-USSR country.

There were, however, some academics who reported they did not actually want to push their academic career forward at an Australian university:

*I was in various research and development and later in high management positions [in Russia] and I came to Australia and now I am just a research officer at the laboratory. This is a step down for me, really. However, I can tell you, I have never wanted to deal purely with research and be like a post doc. I am good at organising processes, people, etc., not just doing pure science. So, I am quite happy here. (Lada)*

Lada did not aim to reach the top management level and was quite satisfied where she was. It is likely she has substituted her professional satisfaction with other benefits of her migration to Australia, as Lada reported that, besides her academic work, she had

many things to keep her busy: managing a number of real-estate investment projects, spending more time with her partner and parents, walking her dogs on the beach and growing her own vegetables and fruit. She sees these as positive aspects that she would have never had if she had remained in the ex-USSR. Another study participant had chosen *“to change [his] professional orientation from the pure scientific research to the arts and humanities to work with people”* (Kostya) and thus completed another university course with a degree in the new field. Participants Lada and Kostya were not afraid to curtail their academic careers and to seek more interesting options for further professional or personal development.

To develop professionally, ten study participants had undertaken a higher degree by research (a second Masters, or, more often, a PhD) in Australia. Many of them undertook an Australian postgraduate degree in their own discipline, but nearly 40% chose to research in a new area. In addition, most of the participants that undertook further study in Australia did so while concurrently researching teaching and/or supervising at universities. In fact, 22 out of 24 participants were working as academics in South Australian universities at the time of the interview.

Despite the obvious disruption to their academic career by such studies, these participants reported they consider their career not being interrupted so much as slightly delayed:

*Well, I had a short break [from full-time lecturing]. I don't think it was a step back really. It was due to the absence of contacts and Australian work experience. It is tough to start from zero. (Vadim)*

Those participants also shared their achievements of obtaining part-time tutoring contracts while studying for a doctorate, so not only their research, but also their teaching skills were further developed in Australia.

During the interviews many academics talked about university funding limitations and cost-saving policies. They were aware that the number of new academic positions on offer is not growing, research funding is being cut and short-term employment contracts prevail (Andrews, Bare, Bentley, Goedegebuure, Pugsley, & Rance. 2016; Bentley, Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure, & Meek, 2013; May, Strachan, & Peetz, 2013); hence, it is not surprising that migrant academics are concerned about the prospects of their ongoing employment in Australia. The overall feeling of uncertainty over future employment can influence not only staff engagement and commitment, but also the quality of education (Edwards, Bexley, & Richardson, 2011; Gottschalk and McEarchern (2010). Despite this situation, participants voiced their opinion that overall, when Australian universities employ international academics, they are employing the best of the best:

*People they choose are exceptionally good in their field. These people bring a wealth of knowledge and huge benefits to the universities with them. It is great that our faculty is so international! (Vasilij)*

Indeed, the market for academic jobs in South Australia is limited, so to be successful international academics have to think creatively about how to apply their knowledge and skills effectively in their new jobs and how to secure their position.

In order to obtain an academic position, early career researchers and recent university PhD graduates found that established connections between their research, industry



and the real world to be an employability asset. An early career researcher Marina explained that she wanted to pass her industry experience to future graduates:

*After I left the university I saw how the industry did things differently and how the universities were actually not connected. ... At some stage I would like to teach part time at the university because I think students could benefit from hands-on experience, straight from industry. (Marina)*

Since the interview Marina has been offered and accepted a full-time teaching position in a leading Australian university. Study participant Sofia was proactive in finding the industry sources to continue her research after completing her PhD:

*My PhD project was subsidised by the industry and they were very interested in the results of my work. Chances are this collaboration might be extended in the same or another context. There is still a good chance for new research. (Sofia)*

Overall, the findings demonstrated that all the participants were continuing to work as academics, and were passionate about their area of knowledge, discipline and students. As expected, the data demonstrated that many academics were able to continue their previous research in Australia, some found other ways to express themselves in the Australian academy (for example, they changed their discipline area or took administration and management roles), while some reported their careers as totally disrupted. Those ex-USSR academics who are unlikely to return to academia did not fit the study inclusion criteria and thus were not interviewed. On the whole, most study participants considered their careers experienced a setback caused by migration to Australia, but maintained their continuity in the longer term. Taking a postgraduate

course in their discipline or in a new field was a popular strategy to continue their academic development.

## **7.5. Conclusion**

The findings reported here demonstrate that academics from the USSR/ex-USSR faced a number of challenges in fitting in to their new university workplaces in Australia.

While some challenges were specific to study participants because of their Soviet background, most described challenges are consistent with the international academics' challenges at any new academic workplace (Da Wan & Sirat, 2018; Gimenez & Morgan, 2017; Hosein et al., 2018; Hsieh, 2012; Kinchin et al., 2018; Lu & Samaratunge, 2016; Maadad & Tight, 2014; Ruby, Kuzhabekova, & Lee, 2016; Uusimaki & Garvis, 2017). There are seven people in the pool of study participants who had several years of international academic experience prior to their migration to Australia: three participants did their Master degree overseas and about a quarter had short-term research contracts in Europe or America. Findings demonstrated that having some international academic experience made them more open to new ideas and ways of doing things, which had eased their fitting in at the new Australian university. However, the findings of the study also demonstrated that, despite participants' international experience in a third country, most of their views on teaching and research were shaped by their USSR cultural background that had formed during their education and early academic years in the USSR/ex-USSR country. This will be discussed in detail in Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

More specifically, the findings demonstrated that participants' expectations of jobs in Australia were shaped by the work experiences in their country of origin and elsewhere. However, it was not a sufficiently solid base to build their expectations of

Australian higher education and, hence, it was not surprising that some of their expectations were not met. Furthermore, participants faced a lack of information about the university culture, including professional development, promotion opportunities, and everyday practical operational aspects. Additionally, the interviews revealed that several factors may help new international academics better settle into Australian universities, including being aware of the casual employment conditions of many academic jobs and being ready to demonstrate their academic skills and value; being social at work and supporting professional collegiality by valuing diversity of views and opinions and sharing their knowledge.

In particular, the data showed that induction and orientation programs provided by the South Australian universities were quite generic and international academics (and their institutions) would benefit from providing new academic staff more comprehensive induction and orientation. The findings indicated that these programs might cover the cultural values and the milieu of the university, and could talk about collegiality, collaboration, teamwork, social activity, work place interpersonal behaviour, egalitarianism and authority. It is equally important that international academics commencing work in Australian universities are able to learn more about how to meet their academic work expectations better and their options for further professional development and career progression. Providing an opportunity to learn about university culture, practices and procedures upfront would ensure a faster, smoother process of integration of international academic migrants into the Australian academy.

Interview data indicated that, due to academic mobility, participants received an opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills further, advance their discipline and

continue being academics. Despite the issues of working in a non-native language and the challenges of the unknown organisational culture of the new workplace, it was surprising to discover that most of the study participants thought their careers were not disrupted unduly by their move to Australia. The findings demonstrated that adapting to a new university position does not depend on the academic discipline, but is rather linked to professional and individual experiences prior to the migration to Australia and negotiation of new Australian work situations. These issues are further discussed in Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

As discussed in Chapter 2, acculturation is a two-way process in the course of which not only migrants, but also the members of the host culture can experience some changes. In the university environment these changes manifest themselves in the diversity of student and staff population, internationalisation of the curriculum and a focus on the intercultural competencies of the university graduates. Although some challenges outlined here are specific to ex-USSR academics in South Australia, most of the problems of acculturation and fitting in to the new university are likely to be experienced by any international academics. The unconscious influence of the prior experience and home country background is part of the package that all international academics bring, and thus some adjustment is usually necessary.

## Chapter 8. Teaching Experiences

### 8.1. Introduction

Teaching has long been a fundamental activity of most academics at universities (Atkins & Brown, 2002; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Clark, 1997; Ramsden, 2003). Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education bring changes to the way university teaching is carried out (Morley et al., 2018; Smith, 2013, 2014; Uusimaki & Garvis, 2016). As discussed in Chapter 2, these changes are manifested not only in new ways of accessing data and information, and creating, using and sharing knowledge, but also through focussing on multidisciplinary education that is solving problems and meeting society's needs (Ramsden, 2003). The continuing increase of student numbers introduces more diversity to campuses and further internationalisation of the student and staff population (Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2008; Smith, 2013, 2014). An important focus of higher education is shifting to preparing university graduates for the global employment market. Moreover, modern technology supplies various methods of course delivery, supporting ideas of equitable access and lifelong learning. All these elements are making the lecturer's role more complex and multifaceted. While teaching is still one of the main obligations of the university lecturer, there are also many other ongoing requisites, including a requirement to research and publish (unless the position is "teaching-only"); to participate in conferences; to pursue professional development; and to carry out many administration and management tasks. All these factors have placed considerable pressure on university teachers. Thus, it is not surprising that when international academics start working at Australian universities, they experience some additional challenges fitting in to the new university environment. In order for migrant academics to adapt successfully, adjustment might

be required to teaching practices, to expectations about students, and to their understanding of the learning and teaching processes in general.

Ex-USSR university lecturers and researchers have brought with them their teaching practices, beliefs and experiences of working under a different higher education system and living in different countries. Previous research shows that past experiences, not surprisingly, often determine individuals' understanding of their present experiences (King, 2007; Wang & Wu, 2008; Zimmerman, Boekarts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000). The participants were asked about their teaching experiences at Australian universities and the differences between the education systems they observed. Participants shared their observations of student attitudes to higher education and university attendance. Participants also communicated their interpretation of the narrow education focus offered by some university schools and colleges. The data also provided an account of the participants' understanding and use of pedagogical practices, such as lecturing, exams and course evaluation.

## **8.2. Student behaviours and expectations**

One of the most commonly raised issues during the interviews were student behaviours and attitudes to higher education. The participants' views on these issues will be discussed in the following subsections: student attitudes to the value of higher education and motivation to complete their course of study; university attendance; and the narrow focus of university education.

### **8.2.1. Student attitudes to higher education and motivation to complete the course**

Student attitudes to higher education and their limited enthusiasm and drive to obtain a bachelor degree was commented on by five out of twenty-four ex-USSR academics. According to the Australian Department of Education statistics, the university dropout rate of the Australian domestic undergraduate students has been growing recently, with average figures indicating that one out of three students fail to complete their studies within six years of enrolment (DET, 2017). One of the participants noticed that some local students stood out of the general student cohort *“like an eyesore”* (Ludmila) by displaying non-competitive, relaxed, passive behaviour with little commitment to complete their degree. Three ex-USSR academics reported they were surprised to observe how Australian students seemed to downgrade the importance of higher education; this attitude did not match participants’ own beliefs of the value of a university degree and their personal experiences.

It is generally recognised that the *“demand for access to higher education is inevitable, as a postsecondary degree or certificate is seen as a key to social and economic success in many corners of the globe”* (Forest & Altbach, 2006, p. 1). Indeed, having a degree in the USSR and in post-Soviet countries was often thought to be the minimum basic expectation for good employment opportunities (Kruzhkova & Rushchitskaya, 2013). Not surprisingly, one participant explained that *“everyone was dreaming to go to study to Moscow or to Leningrad, most of the schoolkids were”* (Leonid), because universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) have always been considered the best in the USSR. There was at least one university in every big Soviet city, as not everyone could be accepted to the elite universities of Moscow or St.

Petersburg (Raleigh, 2012). Participant Leonid further recounted: *“My dad gave me money for a one way ticket to get to the nearest university. He said – go and become an engineer.”* Although Leonid excelled in an academic field different from engineering, he indicated that it was a matter of pride for his parents to see their child get a university degree. This attitude was typical for many USSR parents (Kelly, 2007; Zajda & King, 2014).

To enter into a Soviet university was not easy: each applicant had to sit examinations in several subjects, depending on their future specialty. Competition to be accepted into a university was traditionally high, usually with more than ten applicants for each place (Schneider, 2013). Not only were academic parameters of an applicant assessed, but also his or her nationality and social class, as working-class people were prioritised in the USSR (Dobson, 1977; Petrov & Temple, 2004; Petrov & Quinn, 2017). The quality of university education in the USSR was regarded by participants to be quite high and even today “nostalgia for Soviet achievements in education and science remains relatively strong in the society” (Smolentseva, 2015, p. 20). University education in the USSR was free; however, on graduation each student had to sign a two-year compulsory employment contract. After the collapse of the USSR many universities introduced tuition fees and abolished mandatory employment after the graduation. Though the quality of higher education in the post-Soviet countries today is falling behind the world leaders, the prestige of having a degree remains high (Kuzminov, Semenov, & Froumin, 2015). A recent post-Soviet university graduate Marina reported her education in the post-Soviet university was quite expensive and was viewed as a luxury. Indeed, in some ex-USSR countries obtaining a university degree was desirable, but not affordable to every family (Smolentseva, 2012). Against the perception of the



high value of a university degree, ex-USSR and post-Soviet academics were astonished by the attitudes that some domestic students demonstrate in Australia: *“It is absolutely shocking that Australians are not after higher education at all”* (Tamara). Likewise, participant Marina shared her opinion that some Australians do not see much importance in obtaining a degree:

*I think it might sound a bit negative, but I think Australian people do not value higher education.... The attitude of the local students is: “I don’t care. It’s too hard”. In Australia you can have a good job and you can buy a house and have a family even if you don’t go to a university. So, education is pretty undervalued here. (Marina)*

Marina and a few other academic migrants reported they did not see there was a clear motivation for local Australian students to study for a degree. Participants agreed that many Australians share an understanding that neither a university degree nor a high GPA is the guarantee of a good job in future:

*Australian people do not really value higher education and are not competitive enough. It is a widespread understanding that anyone can do well without any higher education. (Inna)*

Indeed, many study participants were at a loss having noticed the attitude that in Australia a degree might not be needed at all to get a well-paid job as a respectable worker; hands-on experience could open more doors in the future (Kirp, 2003a). In contrast, ex-USSR academics expressed their opinion that a higher education was essential, an idea supported by many scholars (see, for example, Brand & Xie, 2010; Glover, Law, & Youngman, 2002; Kirp, 2003b; McMahon, 2009; Ramsden, 2003).

Another issue that participants reported was that local students seemed less focused on education than their international classmates, which, in their view, was affecting study completions. In particular, participants shared a concern that some local students in Australian universities were insufficiently active and often dropped out from their university programs without any attempts to improve their results. Surprisingly, participants reported a distinction between the attitudes to higher education of the international and domestic Australian students. International students constitute about one quarter of the total students in South Australia (Australian Education Network, 2018). The findings reveal that, in contrast to the Australian students, international students were seen as more proactive and motivated to do well and to complete the program. For instance, participant Sofia shared her observations of some university undergraduates and expressed her belief that Australian students were quite passive in comparison to the proactive international students studying in the same course in Australia:

*Australian students are lazy. They do not have any initiative. They are not competitive. Competitiveness in some countries is starting from kindergarten, look at Korea and China. Here [in Australia] it is all about "Take it easy", "No problem" and "No worries". (Sofia)*

Likewise, participant Tamara reported that in her view, unlike local Australian students, international students had determination and motivation to complete each subject they were enrolled in:

*They [international students] will fail 10 plus times and at the 15<sup>th</sup> attempt would finally pass the test. Look at Australian students: their competition abilities are close to non-existent. And, yet, they*

*complain about some competition with international students and migrants – just study at home [in Australia] well! So, that’s why we see more and more international professionals around – Australians do not study hard enough. (Tamara)*

Participant also reported on a certain degree of consumerism in the student attitudes to their grades in Australian universities. For instance participant Marina shared her observations:

*The attitude of fee paying students, even among local and international ones is the same – I am paying money, so I need to be given a good mark. And they don’t care. (Marina)*

Indeed, some scholars claim that education today is treated as a commodity with market value (Blum & Ullman, 2012; Cameron, 2000; Ong, 2003). As a result, higher education is treated as a private investment, so that students are seen - and see themselves - as “customers”. This attitude sits in stark contrast to interviewees’ experience of higher education in the USSR, where many students received government study scholarships. This policy enabled students to spend more time studying rather than earning money for living expenses. However, every semester their marks would be reviewed, and if they were not good, the scholarship was cancelled (Jones, 1978; Millar, 1987). Thus, the scholarship provided an extra motivating factor for many to do well in their course.

In addition to the impressions of somewhat indifferent attitudes to higher education observed in the Australian students reported above, several participants shared their insight that the relaxed lifestyle and laid-back attitude in many aspects of everyday Australian life might have flowed into some academics’ and students’ attitudes to

higher education with negative impacts. To illustrate, study participant Inna reported that during the student presentations her lecturer was *“sitting at the back of the class with his legs on the desk and fiddling with candy wraps or gobbling up mandarins”*. Such a relaxed attitude did not meet her expectations of a motivated and inspiring teacher and she assumed it also demonstrated his casual, indifferent attitude to his students. Admittedly, the attitudes of students and lecturers described above should not be interpreted as a current trend throughout Australian universities; rather, this is most likely just several disturbing encounters that participants came across. Nevertheless, such encounters were clearly unsettling for lecturers accustomed to Soviet higher education.

Overall, the views of the study participants reflect their understanding that the value of any university degree is not necessarily linked to the wider employment opportunities and higher economic benefits; instead, education is associated with such advantages as the ability to apply knowledge to a number of various fields, have a broad outlook and a potential to increase individual social, economic and academic mobility and independence. The findings revealed that there were some mismatches between participants' previous beliefs and their current experiences. For example, participants who had spent over fifteen years in Australia commented they agree that higher education is not a prerequisite for professional success, whereas those participants who continue to subscribe to a Soviet mentality or have recently migrated strongly feel that higher education is highly beneficial for each individual. Hence, participants expressed a strong concern regarding the insufficient commitment to completing university courses and a sense of the diminishing value of a higher education in society more generally. This seems somewhat at odds with Australian

government policies encouraging greater participation in higher education, and perhaps indicates the necessity for ongoing public debate about the value of a university degree.

### **8.2.2. University attendance**

Another difference between Soviet/post-Soviet and Australian systems that study participants reported was students' attitudes to attendance at university lectures and workshops. Sofia shared her memories of her university work in an ex-USSR country:

*At any [xxx] university attendance at the lectures was critical. Every lecture we did a student roll and we knew who was there and who was not. If someone had skipped more than 3, max 5 lectures a semester – they were risking getting a fail for the subject. Lecture attendance was of paramount importance. (Sofia)*

At ex-USSR/post-Soviet universities lecture attendance was compulsory; students were afraid to miss a lecture or a seminar as non-attendance was recorded and could have serious ramifications. By contrast to the strict Soviet university attendance rules, in Australia these academic migrants found lecture attendance to be non-compulsory, although some courses do contain a “participation” mark relating to tutorial attendance. For example, participant Nadia, who did a postgraduate course in one of the South Australian universities, expressed her surprise on realising attendance was not obligatory:

*Actually, here I am not really sure why we did attend lectures at [an Australian university]. I could have come in week 8, made my*

*presentation and that's it. And I would not have any consequences*

*[for non-attendance]. (Nadia)*

Australian students are totally aware of the flexibility of lecture attendance and, depending on the course requirements and their individual commitments, they use it strategically (Dolnicar, Kaiser, Matus, & Vialle, 2009). Some students are happy to watch video-taped lectures from the comfort of their own home and may never talk to their lecturer face-to face. On the other side, some students with limited internet access might never use this option. Diversification of modes of involvement in learning activities is part of promoting widening participation in higher education. In general, although lecture attendance is non-compulsory, it is still often encouraged by the lecturers. The apparent benefits of face-to-face attendance lie in the opportunities of building engagement with the lecturer and getting involved in active problem-solving exercises during the class, which are expected to improve learning outcomes (Kember, 1997; Massingham & Herrington, 2006). On the other hand, it is recognised that higher education is mostly about independent learning, and lectures are just one of the elements of the learning environment (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Gow & Kember, 1990; Laurillard, 2013; Stephenson & Yorke, 2013). Thus, in Australian universities attendance or virtual presence is still an important element of tutorials and practical hands-on workshops, whereas lecture attendance is frequently regarded as a ghost from the past, unless there are specific subject requirements.

Overall, the difference between the attendance policies in the USSR and the current South Australian higher education system does have an influence on the current work of the ex-USSR academic migrants, pushing them to adjust their expectations of students' conduct to match the reality. It is also essential for these academics to

understand that being flexible in presenting course information might enable to access to higher education for various socioeconomic groups.

### **8.2.3. Narrow education**

Another subject that often came up during the interviews was the narrow specialization at Australian universities compared to the wider education provided in the USSR. The experience of ex-USSR academics in South Australian universities indicated that what they regarded as a narrow education could become a significant barrier to the success of the students' research projects, employability and future career. On the one hand, the focus on narrow, competency-based training is "inherently utilitarian", often resulting in flexible and individualised program outcomes that directly contribute to the student preparation for work and practice (Frank et al., 2010; Voorhees, 2001). On the other hand, this approach can be perceived as mostly focusing on skills development, rather than on understanding of the basic concepts; consequently, assessment is frequently based on achieving minimum acceptable standards (Leung & Diwakar, 2002; Nightingale et al., 1997).

Any degree course in the USSR usually consisted of a wide range of theoretical subjects and a series of practical workshops and seminars; however, the program in the USSR was rigid and all the subjects were compulsory and could not be changed or avoided. More than that, it was compulsory in every degree program to undertake several work placements in the relevant industry during the period of study. Participant Oksana recounted that many ex-USSR students did not see any value in the huge number of subjects that were not closely related to their professional field, but to graduate they had to comply with the program requirements, so these "irrelevant interdisciplinary" subjects were completed anyway:

*We had most, if not all of the subjects compulsory. ... Back there we had some subjects that were totally a waste of time, for example, the history of the Communist Party. ... But overall, we had a much stronger and wider foundational basis in most of the sciences and mathematics and physics. So, the ex-USSR degree had a lot of useless stuff, but there were a number of really useful extras. (Oksana)*

Because of the intense ideological control of academia and a strategy to spread Soviet ideology through every possible level of education, many additional non-discipline-specific subjects were made compulsory in every degree course during the USSR period (Konstantinovskiy, 2012, 2017). Nevertheless, participants indicated that, in addition to the ideological subjects, they also took many compulsory interdisciplinary courses; it was only after being employed for a few years that they could appreciate their value and relevance. Participants agreed that the USSR university curriculum provided students with a solid knowledge base and a choice of employment pathways.

Ex-USSR academics expressed their concern that Australian programs were, in contrast, too narrow. According to the opinion of participant Leonid, the narrow education of students could become a serious problem in their further learning. Leonid reported that during his lectures he noticed that it was difficult to communicate some very easy, wide, and at times very basic concepts to the university students:

*Students just do not know these things, they have never heard of them and I assumed these [concepts] should be well-known from school or the first years of university. So, some ideas are so difficult to introduce. I think there isn't a strong system of the science education in Australia. People study very narrow fields. (Leonid)*



Leonid tried to understand the reason for these difficulties and investigated further. To his surprise he discovered that most of his students did not have sufficient prior knowledge and it was actually his fault as a lecturer to have such high expectations of the Australian students' knowledge. Similarly, study participant Oksana added that, from her perspective, lacking a wide, general scientific education limits the learning capacity of many Australian students:

*Well, they [Australian students] know how to use some statistical programs and that's it. But they do not have a clue what depends on what. ... They just Google how to do it and then they do it, but without a program they are not able to calculate it, like we were taught in the USSR - just using a piece of paper and a pencil. (Oksana)*

Surprisingly, few younger participants of the study reported that they welcomed the practical aspects of many Australian university subjects:

*When I was there [ex-USSR], I was not happy we had a lot of theory and not many practical subjects. When I started working here [Australian university], I was surprised to see that they are learning only very specific things. (Vadim)*

The structure of Australian degrees and the flexibility in choosing elective subjects also contribute to the issue of narrow education. Only a few academics shared their observations that, in Australia, student choices of elective subjects might not allow them to develop the expertise necessary for employability. They felt that students were more concerned to complete their degree quickly and easily, and, therefore, often choose elective subjects based on their existing areas of expertise and interests rather than using them as a way to expand their knowledge. Some study participants

are afraid that these choices potentially make students' already discipline-specific education even narrower:

*Students are making some choices, but they actually might not really know which subject would be more useful in their future for them. So, it turns them into the narrow specialists from the very beginning. ... Thus, later they might find out they have certain gaps in their knowledge and they have to catch up themselves. (Oksana)*

The right to choose subjects in many programs is given to the students themselves, potentially adding interest to the course and boosting the motivation to complete it. However, this flexibility overlooks the fact that students are not necessarily able to foresee what subjects will be most useful for them in the future. Indeed, the students might not yet have developed a broader vision of their discipline and therefore cannot understand the need for other interdisciplinary subjects and links.

However, participant Vasiliy shared his understanding that, given a choice to study at an Australian or ex-USSR university, Australia would still provide more opportunities:

*In Australia every university has some sort of specialisation or a few. So, they develop these, they might not go very deep, but they are up-to-date as to the technologies and course dynamics. If there is an opportunity to choose, I would encourage students [from ex-USSR countries] to study here. (Vasiliy)*

Hence, Vasiliy believed that in spite of the narrow education, Australian universities are getting it right in many other spheres.

Of course, these are opinions rather than facts; however, the participants' observations regarding a focus on narrow education in Australian universities resonate with the literature and my study findings add to the existing studies. Indeed, some researchers support the view that the narrow focus of Australian tertiary education on specific workplace skills is "short-changing" students (Bennett, Dunne, & Carré, 1999; Bridgstock, 2009; Wheelahan, 2012; Wolf, 2002). Learning specific concepts and obtaining specialised technical skills prepares graduates for specialised employment in a very limited number of jobs. When choosing a university, future students usually consider not only the research standing of the particular university, but also its links to industry and graduate employability rates.

Overall, the findings indicate that there is a concern that Australian undergraduate degrees are limited by what the participants regarded as narrowly focused education programs. The realisation of the differences between course content in the USSR and Australian universities called for change of the participants' teaching practices in Australia. To adjust to the new system they had to learn not to expect that their students were aware of broad ideas and theories not directly related to their discipline; so, an effort has to be made to first introduce these big ideas, make them relevant, and then build on them. Participants also indicated they did not see well-established links between university faculties, which, in conjunction with narrowly focused programs, could considerably limit student opportunities to participate in interdisciplinary research projects later on.

### **8.3. Pedagogical practices**

During the interviews the participants were asked if they could identify any differences in teaching styles and attitudes between their home country and the Australian

university. The narratives showed that participants were not only confronted with some students who demonstrated very different behaviours and expectations of university study (discussed in section 8.2), but also with some differences in their expectations about their own teaching roles.

A teacher-centred approach was traditionally used in Soviet and post-Soviet education, so it was the dominant teaching practice many academics were aware of. As anticipated, many participants arrived in Australia with their own preconceptions about how to teach in universities. Those academics who were teaching in the USSR and several years following the fall of the Soviet Union revealed they were not ready to focus on the learner's experiences. Even those who had been exposed to Western teaching methods prior to their migration to Australia found some differences in the ways they were expected to teach in Australian universities.

Some international academics might adjust their teaching styles, while some might (surprisingly) discover that their old methods were adequate. For example, participant Nina reported significant differences between academia in her ex-USSR country and Australia. She felt that the education principles popular at her Australian university dictated that she teach students in a certain manner, which she understood in the following way:

*The main principle there [in an Australian university] is to stoop to the students' level, dance around them like a monkey and entertain them. And you should never ever tell students what they need to know – it's their task to find it themselves. (Nina)*

However, Nina did not see herself as an entertainer and, based on her previous experience, saw her role in equipping the students with some general knowledge and

practical skills that enabled them to continue studying at the university. Indeed, one of the guiding pedagogical principles in the USSR was to supervise and manage the development of real-life skills (Siegelbaum, 1990). Arguably, this participant demonstrated that she had not really become attuned to the new university environment; instead she took the risk of altering the course content to suit her expectations of what was appropriate. Thus she could ensure that her students were learning certain skills instead of waiting *“until they realise the necessity to develop these by the end of the course”* (Nina). This example shows that some academics might not really need to radically change their practices to be successful in Australian universities.

Nevertheless, the data shows that most of the study participants adjusted their teaching practices to the Australian university requirements. Their main areas of concern were the differences in lecturing styles, focus on written university exams and the forms of course evaluation. The findings demonstrate that some ex-USSR academics found those changes liberating and progressive, some perceived the changes were restrictive, while some participants reported they were struggling to adjust.

### **8.3.1. Lecturing**

Study participants reported some major differences in the lecture content and mode of delivery between the USSR and Australian education systems. In regard to the content of the lectures, just two out of twenty-four ex-USSR and post-Soviet academics stated that, in comparison to their teaching experience in their home countries, there was slightly less flexibility in Australia. Those who had previously independently developed programs in their home country started to teach comparable

subjects in Australia and were not allowed to modify the program already established by the previous lecturer:

*Here, in Australia, there are some particular requirements for the content, so you are not that flexible, especially if the subject was read by someone before. (Sofia)*

While participants were initially not allowed to modify the teaching program to introduce new aspects that they regarded as necessary, they found other ways of including new content; for example, they used interactive discussion groups, online forums or practical tutorials and workshops that are widespread at Australian universities. Study participant Sofia shared that she was drawing her enthusiasm from her ex-USSR lecturing experience: *“Our lectures were quite long ones and thus we had to “wake up” students, they had to be alert during the lectures and therefore, the lectures had to be interesting for them”* (Sofia). It was easy for Sofia to fit in to the Australian university teaching role as her previous overseas experience was in a Western-style university, where she had successfully incorporated active teaching methods into her teaching practice.

Other participants also reported their views on blended or online course delivery models; depending on the participant’s length of exposure to the Western-style methods, some welcomed it more than others. For instance, one of the “old school” lecturers, who was over 60 years old and traditionally preferred to present the course material in the class himself, commented disapprovingly that *“only one quarter of the students comes in person to the lectures, most just watch the recording”* (Vasiliy). Indeed, having taught in Australia for over 20 years, Vasiliy valued interactive teaching methods that he associated with face-to-face classes, so that he could maintain his

focus on the students' learning experiences, rather than on passive knowledge transmission. In contrast, participant Vadim, who migrated only recently, did not challenge the usefulness of the teacher-centred lectures, as it felt natural to have them; instead, he welcomed the diversity of lecture content delivery modes and commented favourably on the "out-of-hours" access to the material:

*Lectures in Australia are more hi-tech. In [the post-Soviet university] we could maximum hope to find some written outline of the lecture online, but we would never get the recording of the lecture itself.*

(Vadim)

This participant not only appreciated the additional benefits of modern technology, but also welcomed students' agency to decide which delivery mode was right for them, as the access to such benefits had been quite limited at his post-Soviet university. Therefore, the longer academics had been working in certain education systems, the bigger imprint of these systems could be traced in their teaching practices.

Over third of the study participants related that the student-centred teaching approach in Australia was an unexpected experience for them. For example, when participant Nadia started a postgraduate course as a student in Australia, she was astonished to discover that in Australia students were expected to take an active learner's position:

*If you don't take it [knowledge], no one would feed it to you, no one would give it to you. ... I was waiting for some kind of introduction, induction or at least a short talk [at the course commencement]. No, nothing was explained to us. I had to realise that we were treated as*

*adults and as such we were expected to find the ways to educate ourselves.* (Nadia)

Nadia reported she expected lecturers to follow a traditional “knowledge transmission” method well-known in the USSR and was surprised to learn that a student-centred approach was used instead. This observation was reported by many study participants. Furthermore, as an outcome of using the principles of student-centred teaching and learning, study participants noticed the atmosphere in their Australian classes was less formal but “positively charged” in comparison to the strict and official environment in many traditional Soviet and post-Soviet universities. Thus, academic migrants started adjusting their pedagogical approaches to match those used in Australian universities and realised that this practice would actually enrich their teaching methods and techniques, stimulate student understanding of new ideas and help students develop and practice new skills. Thus, despite the fact that student-centred teaching methods were not widely practiced at the Soviet/post-Soviet universities, participants did not cling to their old habits of an authoritative teacher-centred approach; most now used a combination of approaches to ensure that all the student needs were met.

### **8.3.2. University exams**

Another topic that often came up during the interviews was the difference in the assessment styles and university exams between the two education systems.

Assessment is an important tool to support student learning, to assess the quality of the program, to identify the scope for the improvement and to measure individual student achievement (Astin, 2012; Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Heywood, 2000). Most Australian universities pursue competency-based assessment, which concentrates not



only on defining the level of achievement, but also on testing critical thinking, problem solving and numeracy skills (Hamish Coates, 2010). However, in practice, assessments used in Australian higher education “often focus on students demonstrating current knowledge and generating material for grading and (often inadequate) feedback from teachers” (Boud & Falchikov, 2007, p. 3), which, in principle at least, corresponds more closely to the traditional assessment focus at the USSR universities.

Nevertheless, a number of participants noticed some differences in the assessment styles between their universities in the USSR/ex-USSR and Australia. Many study participants came to Australian universities from institutions that mostly used traditional methods of teaching and assessment, such as mid-term written tests and final examinations for each subject:

*[In the USSR/post-Soviet university] we had a number of tests to do and some progress exams to pass during the semester. Tests were usually written. We had oral examinations at the end of each semester in every subject we were enrolled in. (Inna)*

Soviet and post-Soviet systems of assessment were aimed at classifying the amount of transmitted knowledge. Memorisation and factual recall were valued, though Western ideas of competency-based assessments have become more popular in recent years. Participant Vadim described the procedure of the exams conducted in the USSR/ex-Soviet universities:

*In an ex-USSR country any exam – whether it was a written one or an oral – was conducted by the subject examiner, face-to-face. Even if it was a written exam, a student had to come up to the lecturer with his written answers and explain what he had written. So, the exam mark*

*was given with the consideration of the knowledge demonstrated at the exam in various ways. (Vadim)*

Of course, working in Australian universities, ex-USSR academics have to follow the rules of teaching and assessing here. Therefore, face-to-face oral examinations were put aside to give space to oral presentations and discussions in class that contribute to the final grades. Also, some participants reported their false expectation that the final examination in the subject would outweigh the cumulative assessment for the whole term, semester or even year.

Furthermore, participants reported their surprise that, instead of the oral examinations traditionally used in their home country universities, written assessments were preferred in Australia. Participants reported they used various written assessment practices in Australia, such as multiple-choice questionnaires, to quantify students' knowledge of the subject, and short-answer written assessments or essays to provide the students with more opportunities to express themselves and demonstrate their understanding of the concepts. However, participants believed there were certain benefits in using the dialogue type of assessment: *"it might give students a chance to prove their knowledge to the lecturer and a way for the lecturer to ask follow up questions, voice his concerns and reinforce expectations"* (Vadim). UK scholars perceive collaborative and dialogue-style models of assessment are able to provide not only summative assessment, but also scaffold students to achieve higher grades by identifying areas for student improvement (Beaumont, O'Doherty, & Shannon, 2011; McDonnell & Curtis, 2014). In addition, engaging students with feedback informally has a positive impact on their learning (Winstone & Boud, 2018);

therefore, it could be argued that the use of more dialogic assessment style reported by the ex-USSR academics has its place in the Australian academy.

### **8.3.3. Course evaluation**

The importance of course evaluation and feedback in student learning is well recognised and different practices and innovative strategies are encouraged in Australian universities and elsewhere (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Falchikov, 2013; McDonnell & Curtis, 2014).

During the USSR regime, only minimal student course evaluation was allowed as every course and subject was pre-approved by the university administration and the Communist Party; therefore, universities saw no reason for further evaluation from the student perspective. The programs were set, and students were seen as passive objects of teaching, thus their voices were not relevant. In Australia anonymous student feedback is encouraged during or at the end of the course. In this study a few ex-USSR participants expressed their highly negative opinions of this practice:

*Student course feedback is an outrageous system. This student evaluation makes us [lecturers] go on their leash. Students are making the rules. You are reading the course for the whole semester and at the last week they are providing you with their evaluation. They are free to write whatever they want and they do not need to sign it. Then I have to deal with their commentaries. I have always believed anonymous statements should not be read at all. If you want to make a point – base it on some information and sign it. (Vasiliy)*

While Vasiliy acknowledged that evaluation and feedback might provide some valuable information for the lecturer, the way this evaluation data was collected at his South Australian university was concerning for him and triggered a sense of insecurity. Interestingly, three other study participants reported their uneasiness as to the anonymity of the students' course evaluations.

A certain negative attitude to the anonymous evaluation feedback is likely linked to the Soviet background of the participants. On the one hand, historically in the USSR, ownership of opinions was highly regarded and respected, while anonymous suggestions were seen as shameful and dishonourable. The absence of a signature usually indicated that the real motives of the anonymous person were suspect. Anonymous complaints were used for various reasons in the USSR, often to accuse someone of "harbouring anti-Soviet feelings" (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Fitzpatrick & Gellately, 1996; Matthews, 1989; White, Pravda, & Gitelman, 1990). This distrust of anonymous opinions might prevent some of the participants from being open to dealing effectively with a variety of responses and feedback. On the other hand, disapproval of the students' course evaluation might indicate clinging to traditional Soviet notions that "the teacher is always right."

In Australia every student has the right to have his or her opinion heard and taken into consideration. Although participant Nina reported she saw the value in obtaining student feedback, she voiced her opinion that current anonymous methods of feedback collection do not provide enough information to adjust the course content, its delivery methods or assessment:

*I do agree, students are to take part in school meetings, they can provide their ideas and opinions, and they might be able to get up*

*and talk about their issues. However, these anonymous polls and evaluation surveys, to my mind, are really wrong ways of getting to know what the students think. (Nina)*

Nina suggested that evaluation methods should vary and that there might be other ways to obtain students' opinions regarding their courses.

Looking from a postgraduate student perspective, participant Nadia shared her experiences of providing course evaluation. She recollected that students at her course did not realise the importance of the evaluation surveys and treated them mostly as a waste of time: *"these forms are not to be looked at by anybody, really"* (Nadia). That is why she reported that when she was again asked during the last week of the semester to evaluate the course, she provided some unsupportive feedback, not thinking about backing it up with facts or suggestions: *"I gave quite an honest, but mostly negative feedback, to tell you the truth. Why negative? Well, actually, the course was not bad, but there is always a way to do better"* (Nadia). It is evident that some students misunderstand the importance of helpful and frank course evaluation. Participants' observation that some students either do not complete the online evaluation or do so carelessly mean that further explanation of the worth of course evaluation to students might be useful.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that participants doubted the accuracy and transparency of student opinions on course and teacher evaluation in Australian universities. Participants' generally negative and suspicious attitudes towards these procedures are shaped by their Soviet background on the one hand, and by the lack of information on and understanding of Australian universities' course evaluation practices on the other hand. In particular, the findings reveal that participants had very

little induction into the reasons and underpinning philosophy of these methods of assessing a university teacher's competence. Therefore, this study's findings demonstrate a need to review induction and, possibly, course evaluation practices to ensure not only students, but also academics feel empowered by the course evaluation process.

#### **8.4. Conclusion**

Unsurprisingly, the study data demonstrated that USSR/ex-USSR academics noticed a number of dissimilarities between their previous teaching experiences and higher education in Australia. Participants found themselves negotiating their old and new experiences, and most succeeded in finding their way through. Of course, this success is to be expected, since most participants were working in Australian universities at the time of the interviews.

Despite the participants' concerns about some student attitudes to higher education, most ex-USSR academics reported enjoying their experience of teaching in Australian universities. Academic migrants made distinctions between the ways in which local and international students responded to the opportunity to learn. Participants were keen to encourage all students to appreciate the benefits of a university degree. The findings also demonstrated that ex-USSR academics were generally concerned by what they perceived as narrowly focused education programs, which, in their opinion, limited students' opportunities in interdisciplinary research and future employment.

Participants found it necessary to adjust to the student-centred methods of teaching encountered in Australia. Those who did their PhDs and spent their early career years under the strictly controlled Soviet education system initially struggled with the teaching expectations in the Australian system; the younger participants, on the other

hand, who had broader education experiences, demonstrated greater flexibility in their teaching approaches and methods. Participants liked interaction with students and active learning practices, welcoming the more informal atmosphere that allowed for greater freedom of expression on the part of both students and lecturers.

Participants were keen to share their own disciplinary knowledge and saw a need to apply different approaches and experiences to strengthen the Australian system. For instance, the findings demonstrated that participants adopted practices of traditional written assessment as the preferred grading model as established by their Australian universities. However, occasional use of the traditional post-Soviet dialogue-style assessment can provide more personalised student experience by “creating opportunities for more flexible, relevant, and deep learning” (Matthews, Garratt, & Macdonald, 2018). Therefore, academics’ previous dialogue-style assessment experiences could be useful not only in providing formative assessment, but also in facilitating collaborative learning during student work-placements (McNamara & Brown, 2008; Winstone and Boud, 2018).

## **Chapter 9. Supervision experiences**

### **9.1. Introduction**

Supervision of research degrees is commonly included in academic positions in Australian universities, alongside responsibilities for undergraduate teaching, research and administration. The nature and requirements of research degrees vary according to different national education systems. Until recently at least, Australian-British models have been focused on a research project, whereas the US model includes a significant coursework component (Roth, Otte, & Keith, 2007). The model of doctoral education in the USSR and most of the post-Soviet countries, except the Baltic republics, combines features of both models mentioned above. Consequently, doctorate candidates undertake coursework and sit several exams before independently developing their research topic, working on the project, writing it up and finally defending their thesis. Postgraduate degrees by research awarded before 1991 in the USSR were aimed at matching the requirements for the PhD program completion of most world countries and, therefore, were accepted abroad as a standard PhD degree (Golosov & Drogobytsky, 2006). However, postgraduate research education credentials from the post-Soviet countries are often not well received abroad, and sometimes are regarded as sub-standard (Denisova-Schmidt & Leontyeva, 2013; Osipian, 2009, 2010).

Supervision experiences of the ex-USSR academics in Australia are the focus of this chapter. As some study participants undertook research degrees in Australia, the chapter will explore both experiences of being supervised, and also experiences of being a supervisor. In Australian universities it is common that academic staff and students do not share the same cultural background; many are also bilingual, using



English as an additional language. As demonstrated in previous chapters, academics from the USSR and post-Soviet states bring to Australia different academic and cultural backgrounds and different academic practices. Supervision of research students in Australia can involve different practices from those usual in ex-USSR countries. As previously mentioned in relation to teaching, for instance, the USSR background usually involved experience of a teacher-centred pedagogy.

This chapter consists of two parts: one part is about “being supervised” and another one is about “being a supervisor”. This was dictated by the interview data. It is important to note that some study participants undertook a second research degree in Australia; however, these participants had previously worked as academics in the ex-USSR and had already obtained a degree before migrating to Australia. The experiences of the ex-USSR supervisors as well as the experiences of the ex-USSR research students do, indeed, add to the description of the experiences commonly found by international academics and students. So, through this “dual lens” the chapter explores whether the home country background and cross-cultural differences influence the participants’ styles and experiences of supervision in Australia and how this is demonstrated.

## **9.2. Supervision experiences**

Postgraduate supervision is a fundamental activity of many university academics and researchers and is a complex area involving teaching, research, knowledge sharing and interpersonal relationships. Supervision of research degrees is often seen as the most advanced level of teaching activity (Sinclair, 2004; Walker et al., 2006). The “pedagogy of supervision” (Green & Lee, 1995; Guerin et al., 2017; Sinclair, 2004; Walker, 2015) has been extensively studied in Australia over the past 20 years as the higher

education sector responds to the diverse activities of both supervisors and doctoral candidates. Not every academic has the required skills to supervise a research project (Engebretson, Mahoney, & Carlson, 2008; Marsh, 2007; Marsh, Rowe, & Martin, 2002) and there are no ready-to-use recipes on how to supervise research students in the most effective way. There is a significant body of general academic advice available on supervision practices and procedures (Aitchison & Guerin, 2014b; Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Walker, 2005; Walker & Thomson, 2010; Wisker, 2012). On top of this, some universities provide structured online or face-to-face training to support supervisors to do their job more effectively. Still, there are numerous incidents of student complaints, changing of supervisors, and feelings of not being supported adequately on the research journey (Grant & Manathunga, 2011; Harman, 2003; Spear, 2000; Vehviläinen, 2009).

A doctoral student's progress depends not only on the student's own research skills and activities, but also on their supervisor's supervisory practices, teaching skills and research expertise. Scholars argue that the major determinant of student success is the effectiveness of the student-supervisor working relationship (Gill & Burnard, 2008; McCallin & Nayar, 2012). It is important that research students are guided by their supervisors to become independent researchers that are ready to carry out experiments and projects on their own and be responsible for the results of their research (Aitchison & Guerin, 2014a; Greenbank & Penketh, 2009; Moon, 2005; Todd, Bannister, & Clegg, 2004). So, supervisors constantly challenge students' critical thinking skills for them to be able to better interpret, analyse and evaluate their findings.

Most of the study participants had experience of being supervised in the USSR/ex-USSR countries or in other countries, including Australia, and many also have experience of conducting research supervision. During the interviews ex-USSR academics were not specifically asked to share their views on supervision; nevertheless, a range of attitudes towards supervision was revealed as many participants talked about supervision issues and memories with passion, though others just mentioned supervision as part of their academic duties. Many participants assumed supervision to be a subcategory of teaching, while others did not regard this academic activity to be a pedagogic practice:

*I am a research scientist. I am doing some teaching here and my subject is problem-based studies for [discipline] students. ... Apparently, I am mostly supervising Master and PhD students. So, I am not teaching or lecturing, I am mostly focused on research activities, really. (Oksana)*

Indeed, the relationship between research and teaching is very complex, as they are often embedded into research activities (Green & Lee, 1995; Johnson, Lee, & Green, 2000; Lee & Green, 2009). Further complicating the categories is a general perception of supervision as “a private space” (Johnson et al., 2000). Whether or not ex-USSR academics see supervision specifically as a teaching activity, all study participants regard research student supervision as part of their everyday academic work at the university.

Those participants who did discuss supervisory practices talked from two perspectives: being supervised and being supervisors. Discussing supervision experiences brought back many memories; interestingly, memories of being a supervisor were less

emotional and individual than those of being a PhD student. Participants' own experiences of being supervised seemed to be important to share when they talked about their recent experiences of supervising research degree students in Australia.

### **9.2.1. Being supervised**

As mentioned, memories of being supervised were quite powerful for many study participants. Academic mobility is common for higher degree students, who are often required to move universities and countries, and is an important part of the experiences reported in this project. Participants recalled their first impressions of the new university, in particular, induction and first days. They also reflected on the supervisor-student relationship, including the general and academic support they received.

In Australia, many participants reported that their postgraduate research study started from the induction. Most USSR/post-Soviet academics who studied for their doctorate in South Australian universities recognized the value of being formally introduced to the logistics and everyday practicalities of doctoral studies. However, according to the interview data, for many it was not enough, as the introduction to their own School or Department was missing. For instance, participant Marina felt fortunate to have been introduced to her school's operational activities by her peers:

*And I had some fellow students there who showed me around. They showed me how to use the printer, how everything works, because there was no proper orientation from the [xxx] School. So, [name] just grabbed me and she walked me around and she said: "Ok, this is how you do it. This is how you do this and that". So I was pretty lucky.*

(Marina)

Likewise, participant Sofia reported feelings of being lost at her School until somebody walked her around:

*To tell the truth, I could not even find my supervisor without help. So, somebody took me and brought me to her office. She was teaching overseas then, but it did not matter. I just did not feel myself lost any more. (Sofia)*

Clearly, more is required than simply the completion of the mandatory online induction and/or initial research degree management paperwork. Thus, an induction might include not only safety and fire procedures, but a walk through the School, locating printers, stationery, toilets and staircases along with a friendly conversation about the ways a particular group usually operates. It is important that PhD students feel comfortable and supported by their School from the very first interactions (Green, 2005; Lee & Green, 2009; Phillips & Pugh, 2010).

Doctoral students may expect their supervisors to be both the administrators of their research and also be able to provide motivation and encouragement (Greenbank & Penketh, 2009; MacKeogh, 2006; Todd et al., 2004). Many participants commented on how important it had been for them that their supervisor was genuinely interested in their research topic. For instance, participant Sofia applied to do her PhD at a number of European, American and Australian universities; however, the interest of the supervisor from one of the Australian universities became a major motivation to move to Australia with her family:

*I knew [XXX] University was quite academically advanced in Australia.  
But the most important consideration to come here [to study for a*

*PhD] was the supervisor. Here I have found an academic who was really interested in my topic. (Sofia)*

One role of the supervisor is to monitor the quality of their students' work in relation to their general well-being. Supervisors might encourage students to plan their workloads realistically and maintain a healthy work-life balance. For example, participant Marina, who completed her Master's degree in Germany before coming to doctoral study in Australia, reported her Australian supervisors helped her in this regard:

*Supervisors were good. They said we know you come from Germany. Germany is a hardworking country, but there are weekends in Australia, and Australia is different, laid back. (Marina)*

Marina's Australian supervisors taught her that being effective did not necessarily mean she should work overly long hours and spend her weekends at the university. Supervisors made sure she worked to the plan, prioritized her tasks and was able to accomplish her goals efficiently. Marina recalled their non-academic guidance with appreciation. Indeed, some study participants demonstrated they noticed that their supervisors broadened the range of the support and assistance they offered, which might include supporting aspects of students' emotional and physical well-being.

For most of the participants, the principal supervisor was the first point of contact for the majority of questions regarding their study. Participant Kostya recalled the close working relationship he developed with his main supervisor:

*I had a wonderful relationship with my principal supervisor [in Australia]. He has become my brother. We have never had any*

*problems. He had put his heart and soul into the project. I had other supervisors, but I met with them every now and then to explain what I was doing. I was working with my principal one very closely.*

(Kostya)

Another role of a supervisor is to provide students with regular academic support. Interview data demonstrated that a supervisor's friendly attitude, availability and willingness to engage in frequent feedback and project progress meetings was an essential aspect of the students' academic support. For instance, participant Ruslana recalled that, although her principal supervisor in Australia was a very busy academic, he was able to dedicate specific time for supervision:

*My supervisor never took many students for supervision, so he was able to spend a lot of time with us. He was really attentive and looked after his students. Once every week we had a meeting where we reported our progress. These meetings were very useful when we, students, felt really stuck with some problem and could not understand what was going on. (Ruslana)*

Ruslana was thankful for the supervisor's attention and also commented that, apart from the regular academic feedback, she found it was really helpful that her supervisor was able to find other relevant academic professionals and referred his PhD students to them as required.

It is, however, important that the amount of supervisory support is balanced with a degree of student autonomy. Some participants could compare their previous experience of autonomy as a PhD student in the USSR with the practices they observed in Australia and found considerable differences. For example, participant Ruslana

recalled that, when she started her research degree in Australia, she felt she was expected to have adequate research skills and academic independence right from the first day:

*My supervisor left Australia for half a year. He went to Europe. He said: "Here is a pile of textbooks. The equipment you were invited to work with is not functional. We have a similar one, but it is also very complex and no one wants to work with it either". So, that was up to me what I would do and I had to define my research project topic and know how to go about it by the time he returned. (Ruslana)*

Luckily this study participant had already done her first doctoral degree in the USSR and was already using her skills as an early career researcher, and was thus capable of working on her own and taking responsibility for the project:

*So, when he eventually returned, I had a few topics and prepared my research proposal drafts for him to see and help me make the choice. He culled a few mostly due to "political reasons" and defined the one he thought was the most promising to continue to work on. (Ruslana)*

It seems the ex-USSR research schooling prepared Ruslana to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. Participant Lena's experience confirms this; however, it is important to acknowledge that both participants were doing their second PhD in Australia and already possessed the necessary research and administration skills to succeed without much guidance.

PhD student Ludmila shared her recognition that her USSR background influenced her studies in Australia. Ludmila realised that she was still employing a rather passive



learning approach that she was accustomed to at USSR education institutions in her relationship with her Australian supervisor. Following her old approach seems to have reduced the effectiveness of her communication with the Australian supervisor:

*I am still talking to my supervisor as an [ex-USSR] student to the teacher. We are not on one level, I am looking up all the time, making him look “down” at me. I often explain it to him – I was brought up like this. A teacher must be on the pedestal and he is always right. Well, that’s my problem. My supervisor is confused as well: “Why are you not confident enough to talk to me as an equal?”. (Ludmila)*

Thus, the student’s background might moderate the expectations of a teacher’s role in the student-supervisor relationship. Ludmila’s observations above demonstrated her assumptions that a teacher should be expected to command and direct. As outlined in Chapters 7 and 8, this understanding of the teacher’s role was very common in the scholarly community of the USSR, where the students were brought up to believe that the teacher was always right; hence, power for decision-making and responsibility for the students’ progress were solely in teacher’s hands. As a result, distance in communication between students and professors was encouraged and maintained (Pshenichnikova, 2003). It is evident that Ludmila’s assumptions of the necessity to maintain this distance created boundaries in her communication with her supervisor; however, her acknowledgement of the negative influence of her background indicated her awareness that this was a problem she needed to overcome.

The findings revealed that some commencing postgraduate students – who had previously been academics in the ex-USSR – had similar experiences of “hit and miss” inductions (like those discussed in Chapter 7 relating to arriving at their new academic

jobs). This highlights that induction policies do not provide sufficient necessary content and information for new staff members and HDR students. While outlining emergency and occupational health and safety policies and procedures is of paramount importance, matters such as organizational culture, multicultural competencies, well-being, and operational policies and procedures should be also addressed at the course commencement. More than that, interview data revealed that the multicultural diversity of the PhD students seemed not to be adequately recognised by the universities. Building their capacity to attend to diversity can help supervisors and other staff understand cross-cultural differences and therefore provide appropriate support to mitigate potential problems.

The findings demonstrated that some ex-USSR doctoral students were quite independent in their first year of doctoral candidature in Australia; however, this might be rather an exception, than a rule. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that the teacher-centred system of the USSR, where the teacher was always right and couldn't be effectively challenged, trained the majority of university students to be independent and self-sufficient scholars. It appears that these more independent participants were fully trained scholars, with their PhD as well as academic work experience gained in the USSR/post-Soviet system. By taking responsibility for their research university project they unwittingly demonstrated some of the characteristics of the USSR higher education system, in particular, a "one-man management" principle (Kuraev, 2016; see Section 9.2.2. for more details on this principle). It is also likely that the competitive system of higher education in the USSR/ex-USSR countries, and the appreciation and high value of advanced knowledge and skills in the Soviet society in general (discussed in Chapter 7), could push post-Soviet doctoral candidates in Australia towards

independence. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient data to claim that students from the USSR are more independent than other nationalities in Australian higher education.

### **9.2.2. Being a supervisor**

Different perspectives opened up when academics talked about supervision from the position of being a supervisor. It was interesting to see that, when the ex-USSR academics supervise research students, they apparently unconsciously demonstrated some of what they perceived as negative characteristics of the USSR higher education system. As mentioned in previous chapters, higher education in the USSR mostly followed a “one-man management” principle (Kuraev, 2016), in accordance with which everyone (that is, both students and their supervisors) must be under the total control of the course administration. Also, as discussed in the previous chapter, the teacher-centred approach (historically popular in the education institutions in the USSR) is likely to have reinforced the controlling teaching style of the USSR/ex-USSR academics.

The interview data demonstrated that over a third of the ex-USSR supervisors followed a “one-man principle” (Kuraev, 2016) in their initial years of undertaking supervision at the Australian universities. For example, some participants reported they were at times overly attentive to their PhD/Masters students. Participant Yaroslav recalled he invested a lot of time in one particular student: *“I sat with this student for about one year, shoulder to shoulder, nearly every day”*. Likewise, participant Oksana had difficulties leaving her Australian students in the laboratory alone without her supervision. She reported: *“If you leave a student on his own, the experiment is failed. Sometimes it is just necessary to sit by the student’s side.”* This hands-on – sometimes even “authoritarian” – approach might be linked to the USSR educational background

of the study participants. Indeed, exposure to the inflexible and rather suppressive Soviet educational methods might have encouraged some of these academics to monitor their students' activities tightly; as the supervisor, they may well assume that "I know what is best for them". The elements of hands-on micromanagement of research on the one hand, and the dedicated nurturing of the postgraduate research students on the other, demonstrate just how complicated this environment is for ex-USSR supervisors at the initial stages of their university work in Australia.

According to a few participants' observations, independent research skills are yet to be developed in many students who are commencing research in Australia. In contrast, over a quarter of study participants highlighted that even though research students in the USSR studied under control and within the strict limits set by the university authorities, they seemed to be better prepared for research work. Indeed, three ex-USSR academics were discouraged to see the practice of allowing Australian students to choose from a list of ready-designed projects; they regarded this as limiting the students' opportunity to think independently. On the contrary, ex-USSR academics recalled that many research students in the USSR were encouraged to design the project from scratch, to conduct the experiments and write it up in the specified timeframe with only minimal guidance from their supervisor: *"This is what we were taught in the USSR, in Russia – to be able to work on our own, to do the research from the idea to the results"* (Oksana).

Participants reported a range of supervision experiences and some might seem to contradict the one-man management approach; however, it is possible to understand them as two sides of the same coin. PhD students in the USSR were often located in industry-based research institutes, rather than universities. In these situations PhD

students were likely to have more independence. Once their PhD proposal was approved, the candidate was responsible for driving and completing the project; the supervisor's role was to ensure the limits of general political correctness, approved theoretical perspectives, and timelines were not overstretched. Furthermore, some participants already held a PhD from the USSR/ex-USSR, so, of course, they were more independent than local, first-time students.

Indeed, a number of participants shared their concern that some research students at the Australian universities did not have sufficiently high-level thinking and reasoning skills and thus were not ready to work independently. Participants reported they were keen to take the necessary steps to assist their research students to succeed, but sometimes this would turn into extensive hours of supervision and direct assistance with experiments and laboratory work. So, the ex-USSR supervisors agreed that it was necessary for Australian research degree students *"to become more self-reliant and independent in their research"* (Maxim). Indeed, it is part of a supervisor's role to encourage doctoral students to become autonomous learners with more responsibility for their own progress and development.

The findings made evident that academic migrants from the USSR experienced a tension between their sense of responsibility to supervise well and their own academic performance requirements. For example, participant Yaroslav reported his concern that, at the beginning of his work at the university, he was aware of the need to demonstrate his achievements in a number of academic areas, not only in supervision. But in practice he spent a lot of hours supervising his research students:

*I totally wasted my time [by doing excessive hours of supervision]. I could have written a couple of good articles. When the time came for*

*the professional development assessment – my status was recorded lower than before as I had not produced any publications during that period. (Yaroslav)*

Yaroslav regretted he allowed students so much of his time that could have been used for other academic activities. Similarly, participant Maxim said that, though he understood supervision workload was a part of his teaching and research responsibilities at the university, he believed *“the time [used for supervision would] be better used for research”*.

Indeed, on the one hand, some ex-USSR supervisors seem unaware of the actual time that supervision might require. It is likely that, by allowing students to depend on their supervisors and not take responsibility for their own work, some supervisors gave students the impression that they were always there for them, happy to spend a few extra hours every time it was deemed necessary by the student. Different stages of doctoral candidature require different levels of support from supervisors, but too much dependency can result in inconsistent or slow progress (Gurr, 2001; Willison, Sabir, & Thomas, 2017); thus, supervisors should manage their hours of support accordingly. Having worked with Australian research students for several years, some ex-USSR supervisors realised, as participant Oksana summarized it, that there was a need to look for *“methods for encouraging students to become independent researchers that are able to take the responsibility for their own work and do it themselves”*. As the interview data shows, some academics later regretted their hyper-attentive attitude and recognized they were depriving themselves of the hours for their own research work. In addition, some academics revealed their feelings of being inadequately remunerated for their extra hours of work with the PhD students. These

findings are endorsed by the Australian postgraduate education researcher Claire Aitchison that “some supervisors put extraordinary hours of care into their students, and not all institutions adequately acknowledge and reward this” (Aitchison, 2016).

According to a few participants’ observations, some PhD/Masters students in Australian universities could be very dependent on their supervisors, as they expect a supervisor to offer them a project and then actively take care of the student and assist until the project is completed: *“The more a supervisor does for them, less is done by the student himself and the more the student’s work is expected to be performed by the supervisor”* (Oksana).

This academic went on to raise another important aspect, namely, research students’ reliance on technology. In her view some students’ research projects would not be possible without modern technology:

*Good equipment and new technologies – instead of one year of observations – something could be done in a week! And one [research student] might have less knowledge and skills – just have the technology and the ability to buy necessary stuff.* (Oksana)

Other participants also shared her concern that the affordability of new technical tools made it easier for many Australian research degree students to carry out their research projects successfully, even though some might be lacking aspects of fundamental scientific knowledge and broader thinking. A number of ex-USSR academics agreed that learning was being hampered by effective use of advanced technology and the well-organised technical support of the universities. From Oksana’s particular disciplinary point of view, the ease of availability of raw data was a negative factor;

instead, traditional laboratory observations should be the basis of a quality clinical research project.

Besides the provision of advanced technical tools and facilities, three participants mentioned that they would like to teach students some practical “tricks of the trade”. In Australia, for instance, many tools, software and even chemical reagents are usually ordered through the research project funding. In contrast, it had been the practice in the USSR and post-Soviet period for researchers to create some tools or chemical reagents themselves, as in the example below:

*When we needed some substance and it was easy to synthesize in the laboratory – we normally did it. We actually preferred doing that, instead of buying. Here [in Australia], people do not think – they just make a list and buy. (Tamara)*

In the regime of the USSR these practices were often used out of necessity, as it was not always possible to buy the materials and equipment needed; however, participants reported this resulted in the advantage of better understanding of the basic physical characteristics of the substance created. Likewise, participant Kostya reported that, during the years of USSR, he and his colleague at the university research institute learnt to make necessary tools and gadgets themselves:

*We were taught to create items literally out of nothing. Here in Australia you have everything ready – just take it. We were short of finance, but we could think outside the box – how to reuse or make something that could be used instead of the missing part. (Kostya)*



“Tricks of the trade” exist in every discipline; passing them onto the students would ensure students develop practical learning and deeper understanding of the subject, interdisciplinary knowledge and new skills, ideally turning graduates into experts in their field.

The data demonstrated that study participants were highly adaptable as they were trained to think creatively in terms of organising supplies and information. This skill did give ex-USSR academic migrants advantages in their everyday university practice in their home countries; however, none of the study participants reported these skills were ever noticed by their current university colleagues, so it is questionable if they are appreciated in the Australian academy. Nevertheless, the shortage of funding opportunities in humanities and scientific research at Australian universities may generate a push towards closer collaborations with industry and other users of research and entrepreneurial opportunities, so these skills might prove to be useful for institutions and individuals (Palmer, Campbell, Johnson, & West, 2018).

Another concern that was often mentioned by the participants during their interviews was the students’ motivation to complete their postgraduate research degree. In this regard, ex-USSR academics reported there was a distinction between local and international research students in Australia, where international students were very motivated to study and complete their program (similar concern was expressed in relation to undergraduate students in Section 8.2.1). Indeed, quite often the lives of many family members depend on the international research student performance. In contrast, local Australian students, according to the opinion of four out of twenty-four participants, and, particularly, Maxim, were not eager to study for a PhD as *“they are sure it [a PhD program] is too difficult and on completion you are not getting much*

*higher salary*” (Maxim). Hence, a number of participants agreed that in perception of the local Australian students the hard work to get a PhD degree was not offset by the value of a doctoral degree and future employment prospects in Australia. It is likely that such observations were based on communication with a limited number of students, as the number of local PhD graduates in Australia is steadily growing (DET, 2017); of course, this creates more difficulties in an already challenging labor market, where the number of academic jobs available is considerably less than the number of doctoral degree graduates (Croucher & Woelert, 2016). Indeed, according to the Graduate Outcome Survey, the full-time employment rate among postgraduate research graduates in Australia has fallen from 87.6 per cent to 80.1 per cent over the period 2008-2016, yet national labour market outcomes for postgraduate research graduates were higher than for bachelor graduates (GOS, 2018; GOS-L, 2018). This means that undertaking postgraduate study still has its benefits when it comes to employment in Australia, although this employment is not necessarily within the academy.

Overall, study participants’ experiences emphasized the importance of providing quality general and academic support to research students. Interviews highlighted that the use of a micro-management supervisory approach in the first several years of their university work in Australia might be closely linked to experiences of learning and teaching in the USSR higher education environment. In addition, the issues of some Australian students’ lack of readiness to carry out a research project independently could have triggered the imagined or real necessity to spend extended hours on supervision. The findings reveal that some ex-USSR academics were sympathetic to this temporary dependency and willingly agreed to spend time on supervision in the

full knowledge that they might not be adequately rewarded and potentially distracted from their own academic research. On a positive note, this may actually have developed a better understanding of the supervisory practices used in Australia. In retrospect, though, some more direct induction into supervision practices at the outset may have been a more efficient way to develop these skills.

In summary, the general trends in the practices of the ex-USSR supervisors are that they tend to micromanage their students and feel personally responsible for HDRs' progress (or the lack of progress). These attitudes could derive from their Soviet background and are likely to be over-relied upon due to the stress of general culture shock during settlement in Australian universities. On the other hand, study participants' experiences of academic freedom in Australian universities and self-reliance in research motivate them to encourage research students' autonomy and independence. There is a wide range of supervision styles that are not specific to any country or discipline. However, it is noteworthy how these ex-USSR academics adapt and reuse their past practices in the new Australian environment.

### **9.3. Cross-cultural challenges in supervision**

All participants of this study spent their formative years and youth in the multicultural USSR and post-Soviet states; all their schooling and at least their undergraduate degrees were completed under the Soviet system of education. Moreover, many participants completed their doctoral degrees and started their early academic career in the post-USSR countries before their migration to Australia. For that reason, there is particular cultural and cross-cultural knowledge that study participants bring to the new destination from their countries of origin. Additionally, as all participants are from the USSR/ex-USSR, most of this knowledge might be quite similar, leading to a certain

homogeneity of their cultural background that probably influenced the supervision practices of these ex-USSR academics. During the interviews participants touched upon several specific cultural and language issues that they encountered in Australia, which add another dimension to the complexity of supervision. The impact of the cross-cultural background on the supervision practices might be conscious or unconscious and could often be interpreted as the individual teaching style, specific practices, and/or individual characteristics of a supervisor.

### **9.3.1. Cultural issues**

In Australia academics often supervise students who do not share their cultural background. Several important aspects related to differences in culture and religion were identified in the interviews. As mentioned, study participants share a similar background – they were all born in the USSR and spent their childhood and youth in the relatively similar environments of USSR countries, so it is expected that their cultural and national background may influence the way they supervise their students. Cultural issues and communication styles, ethnic and religious beliefs, and customs were touched upon during the interviews by the participants.

Effective communication between supervisors and students is a “necessary prerequisite” of the progress of any doctoral project (Spear, 2000). The importance of social interactions and effective communication in academic practice was discussed in Chapter 7; however, communication with doctoral students is usually more structured and often more sensitive. Speaking from a PhD candidate perspective, participant Ludmila reported that her communication with her Australian supervisor was not effective due to her observance of a deferential, submissive communication styles between students and academics (see Section 9.2.1 for details, a communication style

typical for students in the USSR). Speaking about communication with doctoral students from a supervisor's perspective, participant Oksana explained that in the USSR many of the staff and students, including academics, had previously experienced ill-mannered, forceful and insistent communication styles with subordinates:

*We [people from the ex-USSR] have a sort of disadvantage in communication and social sphere – we all came from the stressed environment. We were brought up there [in the USSR]. We are used to a more aggressive style [of communication]. I had initially some problems with students – they saw me as aggressive. It is so difficult to make students work. Here [in Australia] we are, kind of, relaxed. Here we use not a carrot and stick method, but only a carrot one. I am not sure, really, what is its value. It does not seem to have any advantages. (Oksana)*

Of course, talking for the entire population of the ex-USSR is an exaggeration, but the authoritarian practices traditionally used at Soviet bloc education institutions could inadvertently support the forceful and demanding style of communication in many fields, including higher education (Smith, 1998). It appears that, being accustomed to such communication styles, some study participants tried to apply the familiar “command and direct” control methods in their supervisory practices. Some Australian students perceive these practices as inappropriately aggressive. Of course, there is an important difference between being direct and ordering a student around without explaining things, while being rude and dismissive. There is limited data on what exactly made Oksana's communication aggressive; however, other studies have demonstrated that people from different cultures might interpret the emotional or

overly direct way Russians might sometimes talk as daunting (Bergelson, 2011). Study participants also mentioned that in Australia they had learnt that they should be more tolerant and friendlier in their academic communication. Clearly, if international academics were provided with some practical training that included appropriate ways of giving feedback to students, there would be fewer conflicts and misunderstandings. The USSR was a multinational country with over 200 languages and dialects spoken (Grenoble, 2006). Being from a multinational country, participants were used to dealing with cross-cultural issues at schools, universities and workplaces. This experience could be expected to be an asset to an international migrant in multicultural Australia; however, interview data showed that in Australia some academics experienced challenges due to their assumptions about certain cultures and how to respond to different ethnicities. For instance, supervisor Oksana reported that she was unconsciously thinking Muslim women needed help in research:

*I have grown up in a Muslim republic [USSR]. So, I have a deep concern for Muslim women, I feel I have to help them all the time, because they have a very hard life. But this is wrong [in Australia], I know. They really do not need my help. I had a problem with a student from Iran [for whom I was trying to provide extra support]. She was quite self-sufficient. (Oksana)*

Oksana's personal experiences and beliefs about Muslim women impacted her student-supervisor relationship until she recognised that Muslim women were not passive and helpless. Although women in the USSR were supposed to be fully active members of society, the Global Gender Gap Report in 2014 revealed that during the USSR (and even currently) women still confront many abusive practices, especially in

some of the most socially conservative ex-USSR Asian republics, such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan (WEF, 2018). Oksana's previous experience had confirmed this. Hence, experiences of living, studying and working in certain USSR republics might also impact supervision practices. While supervisors might be expected to anticipate students' needs, when dealing with different cultures supervisors should be aware that the line between giving special consideration and indirect discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and religious beliefs might be extremely fine.

Likewise, another supervisor from an ex-USSR country spoke about his understanding and tolerance towards research students exercising their faith during their studies:

*One of the students I supervise ... does not study during certain religious periods, for example, when they fast during the day. Even when it is the usual study time, he can get up and go and pray at certain times. I cannot say anything. It is not possible to ignore national and cultural differences. (Yaroslav)*

It is important that international academics know and understand the principles of non-discrimination, equity and equal rights of every person in Australia. Participants acknowledged that as migrants they enjoyed living in a multicultural society; however, as supervisors they learnt to pay special attention not only to the student's academic and research interests, but also to the student's native language and/or country of origin.

### **9.3.2. Language issues**

In Australia international academics often supervise students who do not share their first language. Many international students share one issue with ex-USSR supervisors:

they are not native English speakers. This circumstance might make the lives of the students and their supervisors more difficult and cause communication challenges.

Building the student-supervisor relationship is important for the open exchange of opinions and the general progress of the research project. In this regard the ability to listen and understand each other becomes critical. One of the ex-USSR academics shared his difficulties understanding some students he was supervising; especially challenging for him were the students from China, Korea, and Vietnam:

*Everyone comes with a very specific accent. ... I could not understand some of the Asians. Just not at all. The accent they spoke with and their pronunciation sometimes were really confusing for me, especially when students started to be nervous or worried – I just used to switch off completely, stopped listening. (Ilya)*

This academic also reported his successful current involvement in supervision of doctoral students and it is likely that, over 20 years of working in a university with a diverse student population, Ilya fine-tuned his listening and communication abilities to an adequate level. On the contrary, participant Rostislav reported that he was aware he had a strong accent himself; however, he specifically pointed out that he did not have any intentions to hide, adjust or improve it. He said: *“I talk as I can. Nevertheless, we are always able to understand each other.”* Likewise participant Oksana reported: *“I am not really aiming at improving my English. It is as it is”*, as she feels assured that her English language competency is quite adequate to work with the students, to present her research findings at conferences and to publish widely in high-quality peer-reviewed disciplinary journals.



It was surprising that some study participants reported that they were able to use Russian language in various academic situations at Australian universities:

*My principal supervisor was Russian, so we were talking in Russian all the time. Thus I did my PhD in Russian. .... Why would we talk English to each other? Well, I had a problem later – to translate everything into English. (Kostya)*

An opportunity to be able to discuss one's research in the native language might be quite beneficial to some students and supervisors, especially during their first years of studying/working in Australia. Participant Tamara recalled she was initially quite happy that there was an opportunity to use Russian books to write a literature review for her thesis in Australia:

*By the way, my principal supervisor was Polish and he had all the relevant literature in Russian. I was surprised to find out that at his university in Poland he was taught in Russian; it seems they did not have any textbooks back then, other than in Russian. So, we talked English, but I borrowed Russian textbooks from him. (Tamara)*

However, Tamara confessed that she could not continue using Russian textbooks, neither could she communicate with her supervisor in Russian, as *"all the [discipline] terminology was in English. I had to learn it. If I had attempted to talk about my findings in Russian it would sound weird, funny, not professional and academic"*.

Indeed, some other participants also voiced their concern that, because they use English at work all the time, they might not be able to communicate professionally with Russian-speaking students in Russian: *"I have lost Russian terminology, I think only in English at work."* (Oksana). This provides evidence that most of the participants

are bilingual: that is, they are proficient in both the language of their heritage cultural context and the language of their receiving cultural context (Schwartz & Unger, 2010). Interestingly, the data demonstrated a distinction between the spheres of the dominant use of Russian and English by the participants. For instance, English would most often be the language of work, publication and everyday social communication; however, Russian continued to be the language mostly spoken at home and between close friends and relatives. The longer migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse background live in Australia, the more visible these distinctions are likely to become. It is worth noting in this context that all but one of the study participants preferred to be interviewed in Russian; as explained in Section 4.3, the interviewer, an insider-researcher, belongs to the Russian-speaking ex-USSR community.

Academics from the USSR/ex-USSR countries are confident they are able to provide appropriate academic support to Australian research students even without being native English speakers. So, although some participants did experience difficulties expressing themselves effectively and understanding their students properly at the beginning of their academic career in Australia, they succeeded in advancing their skills to the required level. Of course, if the academics did not already possess the minimal required language skills for the job, they would not have been employed by an Australian university.

In summary, the findings indicate that socio-cultural aspects of supervision are of particular importance. Indeed, supervision involves considerable direct student-supervisor communication that should not be compromised by the supervisor being unintelligible, judgmental or unaware of the different cultural contexts. For instance, the way some ex-USSR academics patronized students from different nationalities

demonstrated that their multicultural competencies needed to be enhanced. While the acknowledgement of the prior experiences and the use of different supervisory practices could be beneficial in Australian higher education, better understanding of the preferred pedagogies in Australia and a subsequent need to adjust some of the international academics' practices is evident.

#### **9.4. Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the supervision experiences of the ex-USSR academics in Australian higher education. As mentioned, supervision is a complex activity that might bring intellectual, emotional and increased workload challenges to the university staff. There are no precise instructions or sets of rules on how to supervise research students in the most effective way, as many aspects of supervisory practice depend on the individual characteristics of the specific partnership of student and supervisor and their preferred supervision styles. Supervisors provide doctoral students with academic and general supervision through the day-to-day management of their research, ensuring academic deadlines are met and students are making adequate academic progress.

Overall, it has been demonstrated that, from the point of view of the ex-USSR academics, it takes a lot of trial and error to create the delicate balance between the need to guide and structure the student's work on the one hand, and to preserve the student's autonomy on the other hand. Though the findings demonstrate that ex-USSR academics might be keen to micromanage their research students, most study participants expressed their intention to maintain a fair balance between supporting students and encouraging them to become more independent researchers. This balance is reached by building the ability of the research students to be more

responsible for their work and developing supervisory strategies to support students without the need to invest extensive hours of supervision.

The data demonstrated that supervision styles and activities in Australian universities are influenced by the academics' experiences of studying, working and living in the USSR and ex-USSR countries. This influence is especially noticeable during the first years of the academics' practice in Australia. An analogous picture was reported in regard to the teaching experiences in Chapter 8, which is not surprising if we recognize supervision as a form of teaching.

Overall, the findings show that cultural, religious and ideological beliefs of the migrants may challenge or conflict with what is believed to be good supervisory practice in Australian universities. Recognizing staff and student diversity by understanding and respecting these challenges and beliefs is an important part of establishing and maintaining quality supervisory support for research degree students. To work effectively in Australia, multicultural competencies and preferred pedagogies of the international staff members might require some adjustment at the initial stages of their work at the university. In this regard, the opportunities of the formal and informal supervisory development and training programs at the workplace would be a valuable addition to the generic online supervisor training packages used by a number of Australian and international universities.

## **Chapter 10. Research experiences**

### **10.1. Introduction**

Carrying out research is a requirement of the traditional university academic position. Depending on the university and individual position, research workload can vary and teaching-only positions are appearing in Australian universities. However, in most cases research and publication are core academic activities. It is critical to share the findings of that research with academics and the general public by way of presentations and publication, as academic success is often measured by the individual's research success (Clapham, 2005; Harzing, 2010; Lee, 2014; McGrail, Rickard, & Jones, 2006). To do this effectively, academics often invoke the concept of academic freedom, which is thought to be an essential element of scholarly life (Altbach, 2007, 2011; Shils, 1997).

During interviews many participants shared their experiences of carrying out research in South Australian universities. Two aspects of the participants' research work were much spoken about: academic freedom and practices of networking and research collaboration. Research experiences of the ex-USSR academics in Australia echoed the political and economic specifics of working in a Soviet higher education, where "academic freedom" was under the strict control of the university administration. Against this background, Section 10.2 discusses the experiences of academic freedom in Australia reported by participants; Section 10.3 then takes up their comments on networking and research collaboration.

### **10.2. Academic freedom**

Academic freedom is regarded as an essential value of any Western university (Altbach, 2011; Knight, 2015b; Marginson, 2000). Scholars agree that academic

freedom is a simple, but elusive concept that is hard to define (Altbach, 2001, 2011; Knight, 2015b; Schrecker, 2010; Williams, 2016). For the purposes of this study, academic freedom in Australian higher education is defined as “a policy that upholds free intellectual inquiry in relation to learning, teaching and research” (HESA, 2003). Hence, it is equally applied to all academic staff and students and provides for “the autonomy of the university itself as an institution dedicated to knowledge, the freedom of the faculty to teach and pursue their research, and the freedom both of the faculty and of students to learn” (De George, 2003, p. 12).

Principles of academic freedom are imbedded into academic positions and the rights and responsibilities associated with their exercising are promoted and protected by a number of university policies. These policies are in place to protect intellectual diversity and independence of professors, researchers and students as academic freedom has often been an object of attacks from the church, state, university officials, students, academics, and the general public or a combination of these (J. Williams, 2016). At the same time, many institutions have introduced some clauses in these policies that prescribe how employees can provide professional expert opinion and somewhat restrict what faculty members and students can say about certain matters during public discussions (Downs, 2009). Therefore, academic freedom is both regulated and supported in Australian universities.

Participants’ interview data revealed that their political and social background in previous academic jobs in post-Soviet universities have influenced their expectations of academic freedom in Australia. The following two sections address the ex-USSR and Australian experiences of the academic freedom of the participants.

### ***10.2.1. Experiences of academic freedom in the USSR: background and practices***

As discussed in Chapter 3, every educational institution in the USSR was highly centralized and government-run, thus, all universities were under communist ideological control. Autonomy and academic freedom were seen as exclusively Western concepts that did not fit the values of the socialist society of the USSR. Limitations of academic freedom were characteristic of the USSR and the first decade of the post-USSR period, often including restrictions on choice of research subjects, alternative points of view, and on sharing and publishing the findings of academic research (Smolentseva, 2003). Traditionally, restrictions on academic freedom in the USSR were incorporated into the higher education system, especially in politically and ideologically sensitive disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, pedagogy, and psychology (Altbach, 2001). University funding was also under the government control and therefore funding allocations depended not only on the institution's status and ability to secure a slice of that funding (Carnoy, Froumin, Loyalka, & Tilak, 2014), but also on the expected "good behaviour" of the academics and their research field (Denisova-Schmidt, 2017; Ledeneva, 1998, 2006, 2008). In this controlled environment it was extremely risky to say, do, think or publish something unapproved, as the consequences could be very serious. Just one well-known example is the case of academic Sakharov (Altshuler, 2012; Altshuler, 1991; Gorelik & Bouis, 2004). Following his attempts to fight for human rights in the USSR, Sakharov was arrested and convicted; this ruined his academic career and demonstrated that being concordant with the university management and the political leaders of the country was the safest option if one wished to remain in the academy. In many institutions this practice

remained virtually unchanged even after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. For instance, participant Yaroslav shared his interpretation of the situation at his previous university:

*I would describe the researchers as frogs sitting in a research institute for many years. Yes, the frogs in the swamp. The frogs croaking together - in tune to the [politically] correct ideas. And it didn't really matter, whether they were in St. Petersburg or in Moscow or wherever. No growth, no professional development. (Yaroslav)*

Some researchers claim that, in the USSR, academic autonomy and research opportunities depended not only on the individual's academic status and political affiliation, but also on having contacts and working connections with the right people in the institution's administration (Denisova-Schmidt, 2017; Denisova-Schmidt & Leontyeva, 2013; Ledeneva, 1998, 2006, 2008). Without these, it was often impossible to obtain opportunities for professional growth and recognition. One participant, currently a well-established Australian expert in his field, reported his initial difficulties enrolling in a PhD in his research institute in the USSR:

*Having graduated from the XXX State University, 5-year full-time program, with a Bachelor degree with honours in YYY, I was only allowed to work as a laboratory technician at the YYY research institute in XXX region, USSR. I was working there for five years. I was eager to do some research, but I was told: "Your education is not high enough even to be thinking of a PhD". (Leonid)*

Finally, Leonid had a chance to talk informally to a person close to the President of the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences about his passion for research and was



immediately accepted into the doctorate program. Indeed, knowing the “right people” worked. Leonid further reported that, after defending his PhD thesis, he was granted relative freedom in his research; however, in return he had to forfeit any chance for personal academic recognition:

*I was lucky enough in some sense - or not lucky - to be in the situation when the topic was 100% mine as there were no specialists in it at all. So, I had to work and others would happily go abroad to report on my progress and findings. That went on for years. Somebody had to work, otherwise “they” at the top wouldn’t travel. (Leonid)*

Such limited freedom to demonstrate his own findings was extremely discouraging for a young academic, so he started to think about leaving his home country. Indeed, in the 1980s and 1990s there was little hope for academic freedom in the USSR.

However, there were some exceptions.

Several research institutions in the USSR, especially those focused on areas far from political concerns, such as fundamental mathematics, biology and chemistry, were internationally regarded as centres of academic excellence (Graham, 1990, 1993).

These institutions had government support and good standing, which allowed them to start cooperating with several Western research universities. As a result, talented USSR scientists were permitted to participate in postgraduate study abroad programs, fellowships, and joint research projects. For instance, participant Maxim recalled that a very proactive CEO of his research institute was able to find the financial resources necessary to carry on innovative projects even before 1991. Furthermore, this CEO was passionate about his researchers having international experience by working at European universities. He supported temporary international appointments and

wholeheartedly believed that “*when all the researchers return from their overseas posts – our institute would boom with new ideas, technologies and skills*” (Maxim). So in 1990-1991 Maxim was fortunate enough to be sent to work in Germany. He recalled:

*While I was working in Germany everything crashed. No such country [USSR] anymore. Everything started to crumble. I felt I had nowhere to return. I wasn't sure what the future held for science [in his ex-USSR country] and did my best not to return back. (Maxim)*

Thus, to continue working in academia Maxim had to find academic and research opportunities outside his home country. A similar experience was reported by three other participants. Furthermore, as was pointed out in Chapters 5 and 7, the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the following political and financial turmoil in the newly independent countries, brought an end to centralised funding for research institutions. Suddenly, institutions had to survive independently and many research institutes and programs were forced to close. Issues of academic freedom paled against a background of the general decay of economics, morale and academics' struggle for survival (Hanson, 2014).

Likewise, participant Yaroslav shared his memories of discouragement that motivated him to leave his home country (this example is also discussed in section 5.4, Chapter 5 in the context of professional academic aspirations). In the times of the USSR, this participant welcomed an opportunity to participate in a research project at one Western university. Yaroslav's overseas experience proved to him that Soviet academics were of high intellectual level and had good potential. He reported that his Western colleagues confessed they did not expect a young researcher from the USSR

to be comparable with Western scientists. Additionally, this international work experience fanned Yaroslav's desire to become a part of the free-thinking international academic community.

After the USSR collapse, some ex-USSR countries became more open, affording some researchers wider opportunities to work abroad and/or to actively network with international colleagues (Moody, 1996). The 1991 legislation "On Entry and Exit from the USSR" greatly liberalized migration procedures; however, it also prevented many scientists who had any access to state secrets from emigrating for at least five years. In addition, after 1991 many leading post-Soviet scientists were provided with grants by the International Science Foundation scheme (Dezhina & Graham, 2005; Eaton & Eaton, 1998), popularly known as the "Soros money" after the founder, George Soros. These grants were critical in ensuring many ex-USSR academics could survive and stay in academia. This international financial support scheme was not just a way to deal with the lack of research funding: it ensured academics had greater freedom to choose the focus and direction of their research. In addition to encouraging scientists to continue their research, international grants often made the attendance at international conferences feasible. Conference participation and networking made many of the study participants confident that ex-USSR academics could be recognised worldwide as professionals in their field. Many of the ex-USSR academics imagined the possibility of having greater academic freedom and the autonomy to make decisions regarding their research direction if "*only they were working at a Western [type] university*" (Maria). Experiencing a lack of academic freedom in the USSR became an important "push" factor for migration to Western countries, including Australia.

### ***10.2.2. Experiences of academic freedom and autonomy in Australia***

Ex-USSR academics arrived in Australian universities expecting that they would have better academic resources and opportunities for professional growth and development. Despite some academics' comments that their expectations of academic freedom had been somewhat exaggerated, most participants were quite enthusiastic about finding considerably more academic freedom in Australian universities than they had previously enjoyed.

Those ex-USSR academics who had been overly optimistic found themselves still being regulated and constrained to some extent (as already mentioned in Chapters 7, 8 and 9). Surprisingly, three academics were disillusioned to discover that Western academic freedom did not provide an opportunity to research whatever seemed interesting; rather, projects funded by the public purse had to be accountable and produce research output. For example, participant Vasilii had an impression of limitless research opportunities in Australia on arrival; however, he soon learned he was required to work productively as part of the international research project team (this example is discussed in Chapter 7, Section 7.2.1 in more detail).

In addition, over a third of study participants shared their present-day concerns that not only early career researchers, but also well-established South Australian academics were leaving for interstate universities, where there were better working conditions allowing academics to exercise more freedom in research. Participants also commented that receiving grants and research funding was becoming an arduous and very competitive task in South Australian universities. Indeed, some disciplines are much more likely than others to be funded by industry linkage grants, while others might not even get mentioned in the priority research areas list for the state (Martin-

Sardesai, Irvine, Tooley, & Guthrie, 2017). For some this appears to have led to a perception that academic freedom was being limited.

In contrast to the less than enthusiastic views of the academic freedom and research opportunities in South Australia, many participants found academic freedom was an additional benefit of working in the Australian academy. Over a quarter of the ex-USSR academics did in fact comment that they had more academic freedom in Australia. For example, participant Vadim reported he felt the difference between attitudes to freedom between his home country and Australia: *“I like to research here [in Australia]. ... I feel I have got a certain freedom in my field of research. The topic was approved and now it is my responsibility to develop it”*. Likewise, participant Sofia reported she specifically chose to complete her PhD study in Australia because she wanted to be in control of her own research:

*I wanted to try Australian academic school, which, I thought, was close to the British one, where there is relevant academic and research freedom and there are not so many limitations; so, I wanted to try it out. I like to exercise initiative and freedom in my research.*

(Sofia)

Sophia valued and enjoyed the academic freedom and research opportunities Australia had to offer. Another participant, Oxana, recalled she was pleasantly surprised when she was asked what she would like to research and what her own research interests were at her first academic workplace in Australia:

*They told me – we are interested in this and that and we have these projects available. However, I suggested doing something very different and they agreed to it. Oh, the freedom of research! They*

*allowed me to work on my very own project. Years later, at this university, I also have my freedom to research things that I feel are interesting to research and I also have my own laboratory. (Oksana)*

Oksana's initial observations resonated with popular public perception of the academic work in Australia: "Academics get very little supervision and huge discretion to work as they wish" (Williams, 2015). Clearly, though, academic research opportunities in Australia do face limitations.

Additionally, a number of ex-USSR academics reported that in Australia they saw wider opportunities to apply their research expertise, including consulting and/or organising partnerships with industry and community organisations. For example, participant Marina explained how she blends her practical consultancy experience with her university teaching, while participant Alexey reported he had set up a company to more effectively link his research and innovation projects with industry. These activities need not only specialised academic knowledge, but also good networking, project management skills, and, of course, the support of the university administration.

In brief, academic freedom in Australian universities, as reported by the participants, was generally quite different to that experienced by them previously at higher education institutions in the USSR/ex-USSR. The findings demonstrated that all participants, including those that had exaggerated expectations of their academic freedom once in Australia, enjoyed the opportunities of research and teaching in the environment, supporting the principles of academic freedom in South Australian universities, which in turn broadened participants' research horizons.

### **10.3. Networks and research collaboration**

It is the view of many study participants that research collaboration and professional learning and networking is an essential part of their academic role (Kinchin, Hosein, Rao, & Mace, 2018; Smith 2015). Participant Ilya emphasised that, according to his understanding, collaborating with others in research projects is expected: *“Research collaboration? Oh, yes – we have it here [in Australia], it is compulsory”*. Study participant Ludmila endorses his point of view: *“I guess collaboration is a part of my research work [at an Australian university], one of the duties. I will not be a good scientist without it”*. Study participant Oksana believes: *“At the university [in Australia] – we have to collaborate. Basic science is not funded much. If we want to survive – we have to collaborate more”*. Indeed, most participants acknowledge the importance of research collaboration in their everyday academic practice. They also revealed that research collaboration can provide recognition of professional experience, better access to research funding, and might also make it easier to collect, store, share and integrate data across disciplines. The study data demonstrated that participants’ networking and research collaboration practices depend on their academic background and social environment. During the interviews, participants described their research collaboration with their former colleagues and institutions of the ex-USSR countries while working in an Australian university and also talked about their broader international research networks.

#### ***10.3.1. Research collaboration with former ex-USSR colleagues and institutions***

The findings demonstrate that ex-USSR academics and researchers deem professional networking and collaboration to be one of the key activities in their academic career. While it could be expected that participants would prefer to collaborate with their ex-

USSR colleagues and institutions, the findings demonstrate otherwise. More than that, the interview data indicates that the degree of networking and research collaboration with colleagues from the USSR/ex-USSR countries vary from total avoidance to active engagement.

#### **10.3.1.1. Avoidance**

One of the research collaboration practices revealed by the study was avoidance of collaboration with ex-USSR institutions. Just two academics reported they chose to cut communication completely with their former colleagues.

For example, participant Nina refused to collaborate with colleagues, including both ex-USSR and Australian researchers. Reluctant to be in Australia at all, she expressed ambivalence about her situation. Nina admitted that she was attached to Russia for life and, given an opportunity, she would move back to Russia without thinking twice. In the meantime, she used *“all means of modern technology to get in touch with only very close friends and a few relatives in Russia”*. However, she reported her complete break with former colleagues: *“No, I do not have any contact with them. ... I think I don’t want to know what’s happening there”*. It seemed that Nina avoided her Russian colleagues, fearing that communication with them would aggravate her feelings of self-doubt and homesickness. She loved her previous work in Russia where, she believed she would have done less teaching and pursued more research-focused opportunities in her discipline; after almost a decade in Australia, she was still struggling with the idea she might spend the rest of her working life in the Australian academy. Her responses were not typical of the participants in this study.

Another participant, Ludmila, reported she cut all the academic ties with her former colleagues as she felt there would now be few common interests between her and her



ex-colleagues in Soviet bloc universities. She described the environment at her previous university as *“a real ‘hole’ that could not be even compared to any Australian university”*; hence, she maintained contact with only close relatives still living in her home country. Therefore, this participant’s disengagement with former colleagues is caused by her personal expectation of the limited value of possible collaboration for her further professional development in Australia. Indeed, one of her major reasons for migration was to develop professionally. Ludmila does not want to share her Australian experience with her USSR university as she feels neither connection with her home country and her *“old life”* there, nor a need to establish such connections.

#### **10.3.1.2. Reduced collaboration**

Over third of participants reported that their connections to their previous places of work and professional network of colleagues weakened greatly because of economic and political challenges in their home countries. Following the fall of the USSR in 1991 and the following economic and political crises, many participants’ ex-colleagues changed their occupation and/or countries of residence in their attempts to survive and provide for their families. In the ’90s many of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet research centres and academic institutions closed down; those that managed to extend their existence were close to bankruptcy (Smolentseva, 2003). Participants reported a lot of academics and researchers left for the USA, Canada, Europe and Australia; a considerable number of those who did not leave their home country were forced to find jobs in retail or became labourers. This situation has been described in more detail in Chapter 7.

Indeed, the disintegration of the USSR in 1991 and the economic crisis that followed it were often identified as the reasons for the study participants’ inability to maintain

research networks with their ex-colleagues. Study participant Oksana reported she kept her professional contacts with her ex-USSR university colleagues, but they live elsewhere now:

*Since 1991 most moved to different countries: one in London, another in Germany, two in America... There are few people left in [the capital city of one of the post-Soviet countries], but actually some of them have recently left for Russia, I am sure. ... So, most of my friends and colleagues are all over the world, that's a fact. (Oksana)*

Thus, Oksana's networking is not with academics in ex-USSR countries, as none of her professional contacts are residing and working in her home country. Likewise, many other participants commented that no one from their original research teams remained in their countries – the majority of those who continued in the academy were now located outside the former USSR. With globalisation and the rise of academic and geographic mobility, these diasporic networks and personal connections are becoming increasingly valuable (Zweig, Changgui, & Rosen, 2004).

Most of the participants reported that they do maintain individual, non-professional networks with some of their Soviet friends. For example, participant Lada explains that most of her ex-USSR former colleagues now live in different countries and she regularly exchanges information and visits with them, but does not regard this network as professional:

*I communicate now mostly with my university friends.  
Communication with my colleagues is slowly coming to an end. I visit my friends regularly. My friends are not only in Russia, but in Canada and America and they also visit me here. These are private*

*relationships; my current work is not related to my friends'. No work collaboration here. (Lada)*

Likewise, many academics admitted that they maintained connections with their school and university friends via social network applications, which confirms the recent trend in work-related social networking (Skeels & Grudin, 2009). Interestingly, no academic has mentioned they use any network applications or online scientific collaboration tools to share publications or news with their former colleagues, though most of the participants are active users of and contributors to Academia.edu, ResearchGate, LinkedIn, and ORCID.org.

#### **10.3.1.3. Collaboration in action**

Academics from the ex-USSR did not have many opportunities to collaborate and develop their international networks when working in the USSR higher education system, but they were eager to engage in such activities. Historically, academic cooperation with the Western world was not a priority for the USSR universities; even more than that, extensive collaboration was often forbidden. Nevertheless, several universities and research institutions, including the Russian Academy of Sciences institutes, established contact at the national level for scientific and cultural exchange; of course, these initiatives were tightly controlled by the regime (Yudkevich, Altbach, & Rumbley, 2015). During the post-Soviet decades, more collaboration opportunities appeared, but due to the fact that most of the research institutions went into survival mode and many lost their staff and resources, these opportunities were often unreachable. Besides, due to the economic situation in the country, the post-Soviet academics had often demonstrated limited commitment to joint projects, which could have been interpreted by their international counterparts as a lack of trust and/or

desire or skills to work collaboratively. The study data revealed that in Australia participants were more involved in cooperation with academics from other countries of the world, rather than with academics from their own country; this often included limited involvement with ex-USSR researchers that had also migrated to Australia.

A few USSR/post-Soviet academic migrants reported they were keen to collaborate with the academic institutions of the post-Soviet bloc. Participant Leonid shared his view that, historically, the collaboration strategy of many Soviet laboratories and research institutions made it hard to collaborate with overseas professionals in the field. Clearly, having a willingness to set up an international research collaboration might be not enough, as a certain ability and commitment to continue working together is important. Indeed, successful networking requires researchers to be actively engaged in what others are saying and doing and be prepared to contribute to the project when expected (Hunter & Leahey, 2008; Kyvik & Reymert, 2017; Leahey, 2016). In Leonid's observations, Soviet researchers were in a very difficult situation – many of them wanted to collaborate with overseas partners, but, due to the Soviet system of higher education management, they rarely had the necessary funding, nor were they permitted to investigate certain topics.

Participant Leonid further explained that he was in regular contact with his former colleagues in an ex-USSR country and was encouraged to observe that collaboration opportunities were slowly improving:

*There are some grants [available for the ex-USSR research institutions] and we can try to work together. Now they [ex-USSR country authorities] have amended some legislation and research institutes have the right to pay non-citizens for work. Things are*

*changing. Now a researcher is signing a contract and as to the contract one might have to work at the certain institute for one month or 3 months and they will actually pay you the salary, not only pay for your tickets. (Leonid)*

Leonid would welcome opportunities to collaborate with researchers in his home country, especially if it were to introduce new theories and practices used in Australia—but has yet to start such a collaboration.

Australian early career researcher Sofia reported that she was interested in organising a joint project with her ex-USSR country:

*[Currently] there are no people interested in my topic abroad, really. I work with Australian people. We have Australian context, Australian topic, and Australian field. In principle, there are possibilities to collaborate with [ex-USSR country] – I know there are a couple of universities which could be interested in my topic. (Sofia)*

So, a number of Australian ex-USSR academics are keen to set up new connections and to maintain their existing professional networks with their former colleagues and research institutions from the countries of the ex-USSR. Indeed, it could be expected that it is easier to collaborate with the partners from one's home country (Christou & Mavroudi, 2015; Hugo & Bakalis, 2009). There is, however, not much evidence of this actually happening according to the participants. Rather, collaboration with home country institutions appeared to be limited to organising and participating in discipline conferences, taking part in visiting scholars' programs, and continuing long-term projects with former colleagues.

International conferences offer opportunities to re-build or to maintain networks with ex-USSR scientists. For instance, participant Maxim recalled that, before migrating to Australia, he happened to meet several “Russian Australians” at international conferences. Regular communication since, plus professional connections, mean Maxim was invited to work in a well-equipped South Australian research centre. Working in Australia, Maxim was keen to maintain and extend collaboration with his former research institute, but *“I tried to organize joint projects and to collaborate more, but with time everything has faded out”*. Maxim’s experience demonstrates that his post-Soviet research institute was not really open to international collaboration. Still, participant Maxim shared his aim to re-build his ex-USSR academic research network using contacts from international conferences. Similar to many participants, Maxim reported that: *“At any conference I go to I am sure to recognise an ex-USSR scientist. I have been in my research field for a long time, so I know many people in the research community personally”*. Maxim is passionate to continue developing his ex-USSR academic network with the hope that one day he will share his Australian experience and knowledge with his home country university. Maxim further shared information about his collaboration with a well-known German researcher with an ex-USSR background. With Maxim’s involvement, this scholar visited Australia and Russia a number of times to lecture and network. This collaboration offers an example of the potential for brain circulation between the sending and receiving countries.

Despite the cases outlined above, six out of twenty-four academics in this study were actually cooperating with post-Soviet researchers. For example, Yaroslav reported he was actively maintaining his research networks with his former colleagues in Russia:

*I still keep a close relationship and regular contact with my colleagues and friends. I usually visit [city] every three or four years. More than that, my friends set up a conference there specifically for the time of my visit, so that they have international speakers there. When we meet there, all the international speakers are ex-USSR academic migrants – one comes from America, one from Israel, and I come from Australia. It is an international conference, you know, but everyone talks Russian. ... There is usually one genuine international participant – a researcher from Western Germany. Other than this German guy, it's a small Russian party. (Yaroslav)*

This participant's experience is widening the international research networking of his former colleagues, and provides opportunities to collaborate with Australian researchers. Indeed, strong diaspora linkages have great potential to expand Australian engagement with European countries and wider (Christou & Mavroudi, 2015; Hugo & Bakalis, 2009).

Likewise, another participant, Ruslana, reported her current Australian project was based on the raw data supplied from the ex-USSR country:

*This Australian project is the work on my old research topic. Previously we have stopped at some limit – we were able to describe everything only at the macroscopic level. ... More than 20 years later – we are able now to look at the same issue at the microscopic, atomic level. ... I am getting new data from [ex-USSR country]. Things we tried to explain in layman's terms are feasible to be explained*

*much better now. We should be able to provide substantive reasoning. This is very exciting.* (Ruslana)

This participant proved it was realistic to revive collaboration with a research institution she worked in prior to migrating to Australia over 20 years ago. Ruslana's previous experience and maintaining contacts with her post-Soviet research institute made it possible to set up this international collaboration. Similarly, participant Lena reported she visited her home country in 2015-2017 to deliver a series of lectures and with a goal to extend her research connections with her former university. As a result, these institutions are now linked with Australian industry bodies and universities, and the work on a collaborative project has commenced.

In summary, a wide range of responses relating to collaboration with people from the ex-USSR indicated that social aspects of migration played an important role in how academic migrants position themselves in the ex-USSR community and in relation to their home country. The findings demonstrate that there is variety in the degree that participants maintain their professional networks with their former colleagues and research institutions. While some participants avoid collaborating with ex-USSR academics and a few preferred not to talk about this issue at all, many participants are keen to establish, develop or maintain their links with their former academic research institutions. At present, however, it continues to be difficult to establish active professional networks and research collaborations with the home country institutions. The interview data indicates that brain circulation between Australian and ex-USSR researchers is not particularly vibrant, nor as common as one might anticipate. Indeed, on the one hand, some researchers indicate that the main challenges of collaboration with people from post-Soviet countries are the differences in language, but also –



perhaps more importantly – cultural differences in ethical behaviour and issues of trust (Bergelson, 2011; Brandenberger, 2002; Fey & Denison, 2003; Ledeneva, 1998, 2006; Michailova & Husted, 2003; Persikova, 2002). This study's participants share the same language; however, a number of participants mentioned that they would not now be able to communicate their findings in Russian appropriately, as their work language has become English. The issues of academic freedom and ethics might pose another challenge to collaboration with post-Soviet researchers. Academics in Australia comply with the Australian requirements and principles of research ethics and integrity; however, participants' previous experience of working in an USSR institute allows them to suspect that the academic standards in their home countries might not be consistent. Therefore, current and previous collaboration experience of the study participants, their individual characteristics and their multiple identities can play an important role in the choice of collaborating parties.

### **10.3.2. Worldwide research collaboration**

Overall, participants revealed that they prefer to work with international migrant academics within Australia, rather than maintaining ties with their home country institutions (many were also inclined to avoid collaborating with other ex-USSR academics now resident in Australia). They also extended their reach to work with colleagues from all around the world, matching their perceptions of themselves as global researchers, even global citizens.

The study data demonstrated that in Australia most of the participants collaborated with many academics from other countries, not only with Australian and ex-USSR researchers: *“our network stretches to the United States, England, Sweden, and Italy – these countries are the main ones”* (Ilya). For example, contacts with a Spanish

university made it possible for participant Ruslana to state: *“We are continuing to collaborate with the scientists from Spain. Our last joint publications were quite a few years ago, but if we work on the newly available data together we’d be able to publish something new”*.

Likewise, an early career researcher, Ludmila, reported she maintained research collaborations with German and Swedish researchers. Ludmila explained that her goal was to promote her Australian research project not only through participation in research seminars and conferences in Australia and abroad, but also by taking the lead to organise several special interest groups. Ludmila shared her hope that these opportunities to discuss the latest trends in her field of expertise might turn into future joint projects.

Another well-established ex-USSR academic Alexey reported he was a member of over 50 interest groups from more than 25 different countries. He shared his view that many academics in his area knew each other due to their publications and thus they occasionally exchanged email messages with each other. In Alexey’s experience, when finally academics meet face-to-face at a conference, they already know about each other’s research interests and methods, and they are eager to set up a special interest group to continue networking more effectively. By working in partnership on various projects, academics might not only advance in their professional knowledge areas, but maintain their reputation among academics in the field and thus promote themselves and their profiles within the disciplinary community further.

The interviews demonstrated that in Australia participants more readily cooperated with immigrant academics than with “local” academics. A number of study participants shared their surprise that their previous experience was not automatically “credited”

to them, and thus they felt they needed to gain professional recognition by new university colleagues as experts in the field, or at least to be seen as an asset to the new university. One way of demonstrating their value was by active collaboration and networking with their international and Australian colleagues. Clearly, many international academics share similar experiences of migration and settlement and might well be more actively looking to establish new research networks in Australia (Kreber & Hounsell, 2014; Saltmarsh & Swirski, 2010). Most of the post-Soviet academics collaborate with researchers within their discipline; however, some reported they were working across different disciplines. Indeed, to share knowledge and expertise effectively, professionals need to be connected into their discipline network (Cross & Parker, 2004). Thus, during the settlement period academic migrants are presumably more open to looking for different ways of maintaining their networks and for opportunities to form new research collaborations than those who are already settled into the local academic environment.

Speaking about effective research collaboration, some participants referred to a “Russian style” of work. Indeed, based on their USSR educational upbringing and the use of Russian language for communication with compatriots, study participants are seen as a homogenous group; however, technically, they are nationals of the different ex-USSR countries. So, despite the fact that the participants hold different passports and, often, nationalities, other people often refer to them as “Russian”, using “Russian” as a synonym for being born and schooled in the USSR/ex-USSR. There is limited literature about the specifics of the “Russian” workstyle abroad, although some authors have reported that several factors can make working with people from ex-USSR difficult; these factors include different communication patterns, different

practices of ethics and trust, and different views on life/work balance (Bergelson, 2011; Bollinger, 1994; Fey & Denison, 2003; Holden, Cooper, & Carr, 1998; Ledeneva, 1998, 2006; Michailova, 2002; Michailova & Husted, 2003). For instance, participant Oksana reported her observations that her most effective collaboration seemed to be with the people who were aware of the “Russian” style of work:

*A good project I am doing now with R.M. She has been living in the USA for many years now, though she is, actually, an Australian, and we are collaborating with her a lot. I guess, it is easy to work with her because she used to work in America in the laboratory of one Russian guy. So, she knows what it means to work with “Russians”. She knows our style of work. We understand each other perfectly. (Oksana)*

Surprisingly, the study data revealed that there was some reluctance to cooperate with the ex-USSR academics working in Australia:

*Why? Because, I guess, [USSR/ex-USSR researchers in Australia] are waiting for me to bring my contribution first. I don't want to be the one making the first step. I have got my priorities, my family. There is so much of a personality here, it all depends on the individual. Well, we treat the ex-USSR people as “our team” and it can make many things easier in some cases. However, look at me. It is easier for me to collaborate with German, Chinese American, but not with any ex-USSR researcher. We tried, but no results yet. (Oksana)*

Indeed, it was found that the majority of participants did not maintain their connections with previous ex-USSR workplaces for various reasons, including absence of incentives, time and professional interests; despite this, some participants reported

they were planning to re-establish professional relationships with their home countries in future. Defining the barriers to collaboration with the ex-USSR academics goes beyond the scope of this work; however, the competitiveness in the local ex-USSR community might be one of the reasons for avoiding collaboration with ex-USSR academics in Australia. Of course, it is expected that the new workplace and country affect the way ex-USSR people think, operate and collaborate: it takes time and effort to change one's habits, attitudes, and typical reactions. It was noticeable, however, that the younger generation – who often regarded themselves as global academics – seemed more inclined to seek out such opportunities.

Over a half of participants shared memories about how their networks and research collaboration encouraged them to migrate to Australia. Participant Ilya moved to Australia before internet networks existed; his rare conference attendances and attempts to communicate with international researchers in the field resulted in the opportunity to have a one-year fellowship at an Australian university, which ultimately led to his migration to Australia. Participant Lada recalled that, when she moved to Australia, her academic partner's established networks and professional contacts became highly useful, providing her with an opportunity to continue her research in an Australian laboratory from the very first weeks in Australia. Participant Marina followed her European supervisor's move to an Australian university:

*I collaborated with my supervisor from Germany, who is now in Australia, because when she was in Germany, she had a longitudinal panel of students and she has been researching it and I was working for her there in Germany, analysing data. And when I came to*

*Australia we published it together, because I did the data analysis.*

(Marina)

Therefore, research collaboration can act as a motivation for academics to migrate to Australia. Several other examples of the network influencing academics' motivation to migrate to Australia were previously discussed in the Chapter 7 about academic career.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that research collaboration was an intrinsic part of the participants' professional activities. Study participants clearly saw the benefits professional networking could bring to their own research and global scientific knowledge, so they were eager to develop and maintain their networks on the whole, though some had cut ties to their home institutions. Most participants welcomed the opportunities to team up with the researchers from Australia and other countries.

Surprisingly, data also indicated that the majority of the study participants were happy to collaborate with other migrants in Australia, except "Australian" academics from the ex-USSR. In the context of globalisation, it is important that collaboration between researchers is ongoing.

#### **10.4. Conclusion**

Globalisation processes make it easier for academics to set up and maintain research collaborations and professional networks, supporting brain circulation between countries. Generally, new migrants are likely to have strong links to the business communities back home (Christou & Mavroudi, 2015; Hugo & Bakalis, 2009), and one could expect this to be true of academics too. However, one unanticipated finding was that, while nearly a half of the academics did still feel a connection to their homeland and expressed a desire to give back to their country of origin, two-thirds of the

participants were not involved in specific collaborations with their compatriots overseas.

Findings demonstrated that while every possible type of research collaboration between Australia and ex-USSR countries does exist – from active and deliberate avoidance through to various degrees of collaboration – there are in fact very few instances of successful collaborations. It was also noticed that participants from one home country would often purposely avoid establishing close relationships with other academic staff from the same country in their workplace, which is consistent with Hsieh's (2012) findings. Furthermore, the findings indicated that in Australia participants preferred to collaborate with other international migrant academics, but not with their compatriots. Hence, on the one hand, participants were happy to exercise their freedom to choose collaborators, preferring to join projects with Western academic migrants; and on the other hand, they avoided collaboration with the academics from the same Soviet background. The fact that collaborations with the West were largely forbidden during the Soviet period may have meant that participants had an exaggerated belief in the superiority of Western scholarship; it is possible that this belief has affected participants' choices concerning collaborators. Thus, it is argued that the background of the researchers can influence their choice of network partners and collaborators.

Therefore, consistent with the literature, this research found that brain circulation between sending and receiving countries does exist (Bentley et al., 2012, 2013a; Carr et al., 2005; Hugo, 2013; Saxenian, 2005), but in this particular case it is not especially active. It is argued that developing and maintaining professional and social ties with former colleagues can theoretically be beneficial for all the countries involved;

however, it is evident that, without organisational support, individual attempts to give back to the home country are rare. Maintaining and supporting existing network and collaboration activities is necessary as they significantly contribute to brain circulation and knowledge transfer between academics in Australia and worldwide.



## **Chapter 11. Conclusion**

### **11.1. Introduction**

Academic mobility is an important topic for many scholars in the area of higher education (Altbach, 2015; Altbach, Androushchak, Kuzminov, Yudkevich, & Reisberg, 2013; Haigh, 2008; Maadad & Tight, 2014; Teichler, 2004); however, potential influences that migration and settlement experiences could have on academic practices of migrants from the post-Soviet bloc countries in Australia have not been investigated until now. This study of the experiences of ex-USSR academics in South Australian universities was underpinned by the social transformational approach, according to which migration was perceived as an essential part of the broader processes of social and economic changes happening globally (Castles, 1998, 2009, 2010; De Haas, 2010). Berry's acculturation framework (Berry, 2005) was used to explore peoples' experiences and understand socio-cultural aspects of migration and adaptation at the new workplace in the new country. This case study demonstrated that academic mobility can significantly influence the lives and careers of academics and researchers. The study findings that are summarised below contribute to the understanding of the challenges of academic migration for an individual and would be especially useful to inform higher education institution policies on recruitment and retention of international academics and, in particular, on the issues of cultural diversity of the university staff.

### **11.2. Summary of findings**

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the migration experiences of the ex-USSR academics working in South Australian higher education?

2. What are the professional challenges and benefits of academic mobility for individual academics?

### ***11.2.1. Research question 1***

Part 1 (Chapters 5 and 6) of the study responds to the first research question and explores non-academic issues of migration and settlement of the participants. First, following the analysis of the interview data, participants' social, economic, political, professional reasons to migrate were identified. Being born, raised, educated and employed under the totalitarian Soviet regime has shaped the identities of study participants. The breakup of the USSR in 1991 was identified by the participants as one of the major migration factors. The findings showed that both "push" and "pull" migration factors were represented: while "push" factors for the ex-USSR academic migrants were typically social, economic, political, and professional, the migration "pull" factors were mostly of a social and environmental nature. Participants' professional reasons to leave their homeland and move to Australia were closely intertwined with (and thus were difficult to separate from) economic, social, and political migration factors. The findings highlight that participants' professional reasons to migrate were associated with the prospects of the greater freedom of research, easier access to information, resources and technology, opportunities for professional growth and development, and possibilities to share findings with the wider academic community. Notably, the finding that economic factors were secondary to the professional, social and political motivations to migrate broadly supports the work of other scholars who highlight the idea that migration is not only driven by economic, but also by socio-cultural and political factors (Castles, 2009, 2010; Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2013; De Haas, 2010).

Prior studies have noted that migrants often experience difficulties adjusting and adapting to the realities of the new country (Da Wan & Sirat, 2018; Furnham, 1993; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Sam & Berry, 2010; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). My findings confirmed that study participants arrived to live and work in Australia with their own imaginaries of the life in Australia; in order to settle they had to overcome a number of challenges. The data demonstrated that participants first went through the stage of culture shock, where their social skills and cultural values were tested. Later, they had to deal with such difficulties as social isolation, everyday living issues, insufficient level of English and the issues of belonging. To overcome these non-academic challenges participants successfully used various strategies, the most common being learning about Australian culture and lifestyle, building networks and making new friends. Participants further reported several non-academic migration benefits, such as economic stability, low level of corruption, good climate (absence of severe winters), clean environment, beautiful beaches, and lifestyle opportunities for the whole family.

Professionally, the majority of the participants had the desire to maintain an academic career, to develop professionally, to have access to the current information resources and technology and to use their skills and knowledge to research the topics that they were passionate about. These were academics' main motivations to migrate and they had successfully realised them in Australia. Not surprisingly, the findings demonstrated that, when settled in Australia, the participants' professional migration "push" factors were reported as benefits of their mobility. Knowledge of these benefits might provide some incentives for others' academic mobility and therefore become the "pull" factors for future international academic migrants.

### **11.2.2. Research question 2**

The second aim of this study was to investigate the effects of academic mobility on the professional practices of individual migrants. Part II responds to the second research question by analysing academic challenges and benefits of study participants in South Australian universities. The data demonstrated that working in the South Australian higher education most migrant academics were expected to combine teaching and supervision responsibilities while carrying out their research.

The results revealed that that, having commenced working for an Australian university, ex-USSR academics had to negotiate their old and new experiences; therefore, they had to adjust their practices and styles of teaching, supervising, and researching. The study has found that besides issues of fitting into the new university culture, adapting participants' teaching and supervision practices constituted the most challenging experience. Interestingly, it was revealed that, while it was necessary for the participants to understand the research ethics, standards and regulations of their new university, their research skills and practices required less adjustment; this is likely to be related to the fact that research practices are more global and universal. Furthermore, this study found that generally adapting to the new university is strongly linked to the academics' previous professional and individual experiences and to their academic identity, rather than to the academic discipline.

My discussion of the participants' teaching experiences demonstrated that academics' previous experience of using and being exposed to a teacher-centred teaching approach had affected their teaching practices in Australia. While the practices of induction existed in every university, the findings revealed that these were often insufficient. An extended period of training and professional support in the first year of

work might be beneficial, so that migrant academics understand the preferred teaching pedagogies and assessment methods in Australia better and be comfortable applying them in practice. The data demonstrated that the main teaching challenges of the participants were different teaching methods, attendance and assessment policies, and lack of understanding of the limits of the students' knowledge base. On the brighter side, an obvious benefit reported was the often liberating experience of practicing student-centred, active and inquiry-based approaches to learning which stood in stark contrast to their previous pedagogical encounters.

My analysis of the participants' experiences of being supervised and being supervisors revealed that the background of both students and supervisors influenced their research and supervision practices; in some cases this was marked by the level of the student's independence and reliance on supervisor's support. Consistent with the literature, the study found that the development of student-supervisor relationships of trust and the establishment of positive rapport highly depends on the supervisor's multicultural skills, knowledge, and ability to manage the sensitive socio-cultural context (Foronda, Baptiste, Reinholdt, & Ousman, 2016; Garrett et al., 2001; Soheilian, Inman, Klinger, Isenberg, & Kulp, 2014; Spear, 2000; Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, & Pope-Davis, 2004). The findings corroborate the ideas of Deardorff and Jones (2009) who highlighted that, in the age of internationalisation, supervisors should have advanced intercultural communication proficiency. Indeed, the study findings indicate that cultural issues specific to the Australian university setting were the most challenging in the participant's supervision practices. Therefore, specialised supervisory training during migrant academics' initial years of work in the Australian academy would boost their intercultural competency and be highly beneficial.

The analysis of the research experiences has shown that ex-USSR academics' education and previous university work experiences can influence not only their perception of academic freedom, but also their choice of network partners and research collaborators. It was demonstrated that in Australia the participants more often cooperated with other migrants and international academics, rather than the Australian researchers. This trend broadly supports the ideas of brain circulation and global academy.

### ***11.2.3. Overall findings***

As one would expect, one of the key findings of the whole project is that the experiences of education, work and culture in the home country of the participants influenced the way they worked in the South Australian universities. The practices that ex-USSR academics brought to Australian higher education were often superseded by the newer approaches used by Western style universities. It is somewhat surprising that participants did not report an active role of the institution in managing newly hired academics, except the requirement to undertake very basic mandatory induction. This indicates that institutions place the responsibility on the academic migrants to align themselves with South Australian university expectations, rather than providing ongoing support in this acculturation process.

Thus, in the Australian higher education context academic migrants would have benefitted from pedagogical, multicultural and social skills training in order to fit in their new workplaces faster. Indeed, just one university in South Australia offers a postgraduate certificate in higher education teaching and learning as a course that could become a part of necessary academic development of the new university staff. The perceived lack of institutional strategies to support integration of international

academics in the new workplace is consistent with the findings of the recent studies that also found that there were uneven institutional strategies that deal with recruitment, integration, and retention of international academics (Da Wan & Sirat, 2018; Huang, 2018; Uusimaki & Garvis, 2017).

Another key finding of this research is that migration to Australia and successful settlement here have not erased home country identity and belonging of the ex-USSR academics. The data revealed that study participants have adjusted not only their academic practices, but also often attuned their social and cultural values to match Australian expectations at work and in the wider community. However, the data further pointed out that many participants maintained their national culture and traditions in Australia, and in order to do so they had established multiple cultural, ethnic, sport and multicultural communities and groups, whose members shared not only one hobby or passion, but one cultural background, history, language, and education. Individuals, who were exposed to and have internalised at least two sets of beliefs, values, languages, and behaviours are often described as multicultural or bicultural (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2017). The findings indicate that in many cases participants were successfully managing complex and multiple cultural value systems and identifications, even though some of these were in conflict. The sense that new migrants feel that they continue to belong to their homeland works in opposition to the requirement to adapt to the new Australian context in order to create a new sense of belonging (Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2017). Furthermore, this study is consistent with some scholars' observations that individuals vary in the degree to which they integrate different cultures into their sense of self (Gimenez & Morgan, 2017; Huynh, Nguyen, & Benet-Martínez, 2011; Nguyen & Benet-

Martínez, 2013; Morley et.al., 2018; & Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2017). Despite most of the participants having integrated into Australian society effectively, they continued feeling their “otherness” in relation to their belonging to both their country of origin and Australia. Therefore, the findings of this study corroborate the broader ideas of Berry (2005) that, in the course of integration into the new society, migrants assume the host society values and culture simultaneously maintaining their own. This study also confirmed that cultural identification is a dynamic process that depends on the individual’s home country background and social, economic and political conditions of the host country (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006).

Australian multicultural policies legislate and support the processes of integration as they are aimed at enriching cultural diversity and enhancing of the human capital of the country. It is encouraging that the study findings are in agreement with Castles’s (2007) statement that migrants are the markers of the social change processes, leading to the global social transformations. On the other hand, the findings confirmed that complex and multidimensional processes of settlement can also lead to changes at the individual level (Berry, 2005), which provide for the development of multiple belonging (Colombo & Rebughini, 2012; Morley et al., 2018). Multicultural diversity of participants could be mobilised as an even greater advantage for Australian universities, particularly when they are marketing themselves as welcoming the changes that globalisation and internationalisation are bringing to higher education.

### **11.3. Study significance**

The overall significance of this study is that it draws attention to the diversity that international academics bring to Australian higher education. In fact, this study uncovers the tension between the ways universities say they manage international



academics and how they do it in reality. Although this project is focused on the experiences of the ex-USSR academics in migrating and settling in Australia and fitting in at their new workplaces, the study contributes to the general understanding of the academic mobility experiences of the international academics.

This study is significant for the international academic and administrative staff of the South Australian universities as it offers important implications that potentially can improve the quality of teaching and research at the university. The first implication is the need to inform international academics commencing work in Australia of the likely necessity of adjusting their previous pedagogical methods to teach effectively at an Australian university, particularly if they migrate from non-Western countries. This study demonstrated that academics' adaptation at work is highly influenced by their background, education, and early academic career; all of these can play important role in some academics' desire to hold on to the previously used teaching, supervisory, and research practices, resulting in initial tensions for some.

Another important implication of the study is the need to encourage and value the diversity of the new international academic staff. It is necessary to highlight that, while it is assumed that international academics should blend in to the everyday university context, they, in fact, were initially chosen to be employed because of their research achievements, the value of the methods they used and the potential diversity and difference that they bring to the new workplace. Therefore, international academics should not necessarily surrender their old practices, but add to them, creating the variety of methods and practices that can be valuable in working with the multicultural student population of the Australian universities. Developing a format for knowledge and practical skills sharing can potentially lead to greater recognition of the potential

contribution of multicultural staff in Australian universities. Acknowledgment of the value of international staff will not only reduce the settlement and integration pressure on the international academics, but is also likely to contribute to the professional development of their Australian colleagues. Indeed, the findings emphasised the importance that all academic staff, not only migrants, can benefit from the new cultural information, knowledge, changes, and understanding of other peoples' perspectives.

An unanticipated finding was that there was a lack of active brain circulation between the participants' home countries and their Australian research institutions, implying the need for active university support. Indeed, the findings revealed that many academics continued to feel a strong connection to their homeland; therefore, if the university is to benefit from the academic networks of its multicultural employees, it has to support international academics in their desire to cooperate with their home countries.

This study has brought together migration studies concepts of pull-push models and brain drain, settlement theories and the ideas of the internationalisation of higher education in order to shed light on the individual experiences of the academic mobility. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, this research is one of the few studies that have addressed the experiences of ex-USSR academics abroad. This study contributes to the knowledge in the field of higher education by identifying the challenges of the ex-USSR academics' transition into the Australian professional context and by demonstrating that academic mobility furnishes organisational and individual changes. The experiences of the ex-USSR academics in the South Australian university context highlight such broad phenomena of higher education as

internationalisation and, in particular, the increase of student and staff mobility and development of global research networks (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2019). The study findings also draw the attention to the less frequently articulated values of internationalisation such as the development of partnerships and collaborations (De Wit et.al., 2015) The findings of this research also contribute to the literature on academic mobility by defining and describing the challenges for international academics of fitting into the new workplace. As such, this research has made an important contribution to the literature.

### ***11.3.1. Study limitations***

Several limitations of the study must be acknowledged. This is a qualitative study; hence, the interview data does not provide useful numerical or statistical information (see Chapter 4 for more detail regarding validity and generalisability). The ABS data provides only some background statistics to frame the context for the interviews.

The rigid inclusion criteria applied to recruit the participants meant that only those ex-USSR academics who had migrated to Australia in the last two or three decades and had successful careers in the Australian academy at the moment of study were interviewed. Therefore, the stories of success are prevalent here, as those academic migrants from the post-Soviet countries that had never been able to return to the academy were not recruited. Also, those academics, who had already retired or have moved interstate have generally not been identified and included. This limitation did not provide for the generalisability of this study, but is useful in terms of indicating potential areas of further research. It has to be noted that while participants are from different ex-USSR countries, their belonging to their national republic was not much discussed due to reasons of anonymity. It is likely that, depending on their actual

republic background, there might be some fine-grained differences in the participants' experiences. At the same time, in the course of the interviews, there were very few indications that specific republic experiences or attitudes impacted on their educational, academic and migration experiences.

Another limitation of this study is its subjectivity, which is an inherent feature of a qualitative research and can present both a strength and a weakness of the research project (Yin, 2015). In this study my own subjectivity could be seen as a limitation, as my expectations and biases could have influenced the data interpretation (Ratner, 2002; Yeh & Inman, 2007; Yin, 2015). To mitigate that the study was designed in the traditional way, using the established methods of data collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2015). Admittedly, my position of the insider-observer was beneficial in this study, as it had not only helped me to build up good rapport with participants that enabled the collection of the rich and deep interview data, but had also helped to understand the meaning of the participants' experiences better, so that data validity was not compromised.

Finally, due to the limitations discussed above, the findings of this qualitative study can have limited generalisability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). While the findings of this study provided in-depth and contextual analysis of the case, the views of the participants may not represent the views of other international academics working in South Australian universities. However, most of the identified challenges and benefits of migration and fitting in to the new university are not that specific to the post-Soviet countries, so they are likely be applicable to any migrant coming to work to the Australian university from any country of the world. Therefore, despite the limitations, the study certainly adds to the understanding of how migrant academics fit into the

system in the times of internationalisation of the higher education and the rise of academic mobility.

## **11.4. Future research directions and recommendations**

### ***11.4.1. Future research directions***

Future research could uncover the multiple layers of internationalisation and academic mobility by considering two main dimensions: academic migrants themselves and the perspective of universities.

First, this research might be extended by further investigating the population of USSR academic migrants. One direction might be to investigate ex-USSR academic migrants in other states of Australia, and other countries, to trace if their academic mobility experiences are consistent with the findings of this study. Another pathway for future investigations is to seek access to those ex-USSR academics who migrated from their home country, but did not continue their academic career in either Australian universities or overseas. These new findings can add to the understanding of brain circulation and transformative collaboration between Australian universities and beyond, as well as the challenges associated with it.

Second, it is important to see if and how academic mobility affects the host universities and their employees. A series of interviews with academic management as well as with teaching staff are necessary to understand how they interact with international staff and in what way academic mobility and employees' multicultural diversity makes "local" academics change or reassess how they operate.

### ***11.4.2. Recommendations***

This study demonstrated that academic migration is a part of the complex social and economic changes happening globally and raised important questions about the consequences of the academic mobility for the individuals and their families. Several administrative and operational recommendations need to be considered, so that academic mobility is beneficial for both universities and academics.

First, it is recommended that more comprehensive multilevel university induction programs are developed that cover a variety of aspects to practically assist new employees to feel themselves at home. Also, to ensure the adjustment period is shorter and more effective, it is necessary to provide comprehensive academic training and support for the international academics in the initial years of their academic practice at the university.

Furthermore, to benefit from the pre-existing academic networks, universities are recommended to provide incentives for setting up or continuing academic partnership with research and education institutions of the migrants' home countries. Facilitating and/or expanding programs of study abroad and student and researcher's exchange with the overseas institutions will further contribute to creation of global research networks and collaboration.

Finally, relevant policies might be specifically crafted to promote intercultural competency and the valuing of diversity in the workforce. International staff diversity could be embraced by creating an environment that accepts and encourages each individual's differences, values their strengths and provides opportunities for everyone to achieve their full potential. All this together can positively influence student learning

outcomes, graduate employability, research excellence, and community engagement, which are the primary aspirations of any Australian university.

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23 September 2014

Dr C Guerin  
School: School of Education

Dear Dr Guerin

**ETHICS APPROVAL No: H-2014-207**

**PROJECT TITLE: A case study of ex-USSR academic migrants in South Australian higher education institutions**

The ethics application for the above project has been reviewed by the Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty of the Professions) and is deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* involving no more than low risk for research participants. You are authorised to commence your research on **23 Sep 2014**.

Ethics approval is granted for three years and is subject to satisfactory annual reporting. The form titled *Project Status Report* is to be used when reporting annual progress and project completion and can be downloaded at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ethics/human/guidelines/reporting>. Prior to expiry, ethics approval may be extended for a further period.

Participants in the study are to be given a copy of the Information Sheet and the signed Consent Form to retain. It is also a condition of approval that you **immediately report** anything which might warrant review of ethical approval including:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants,
- previously unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project,
- proposed changes to the protocol; and
- the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

Please refer to the following ethics approval document for any additional conditions that may apply to this project.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR RACHEL A. ANKENY  
Co-Convenor  
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group  
(Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty  
of the Professions)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PAUL BABIE  
Co-Convenor  
Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group  
(Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty  
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7 September 2017

Dr C Guerin  
School of Education

Dear Dr Guerin

**ETHICS APPROVAL No: H-2014-207**

**PROJECT TITLE: A case study of ex-USSR academic migrants in South Australian higher education institutions**

Thank you for the Annual Report on the Project Status submitted dated 6 September 2017 requesting an extension to the above project to cover the writing up stage of the PhD being undertaken by Anna Morozov. The extension request has been reviewed by the Office of Research Ethics, Compliance and Integrity and is deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*.

A three year extension has been approved and the ethics expiry date for this project is **30 September 2020**.

Ethics approval is granted for three years and is subject to satisfactory annual reporting. The form titled *Annual Report on Project Status* is to be used when reporting annual progress and project completion and can be downloaded at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/research-services/oreci/human/reporting/>. Prior to expiry, ethics approval may be extended for a further period.

It is a condition of approval that you **immediately report** anything which might warrant review of ethical approval including:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants,
- previously unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project,
- proposed changes to the protocol; and
- the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

Yours sincerely

Sabine Schreiber  
Secretary  
Office of Research Ethics, Compliance and Integrity



## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

### **PROJECT TITLE:**

**Ex-USSR academic migrants in South Australian higher education institutions.**

This research is carried out by Ms. Anna Morozov as part of her PhD program:

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Anna Morozov

**SUPERVISOR:** Dr. Cally Guerin

### **Purpose of the study**

The research aims to discover long- and short-term challenges and benefits, consequences and impacts of migration on ex-USSR academic migrants. Our focus is on academic staff and researchers who are working or have worked for South Australian higher education institutions.

The study will provide information for immigration policy-makers and higher institution management. Findings will help to inform recruitment and retention of international academics and researchers and to foster cultural diversity in the workplace.

### **What will be asked of the participant?**

You are invited to recount stories and share your perceptions of your migration to Australia and working in higher education in South Australia. You are welcome to share your memories, experiences, challenges and achievements.

You will be interviewed by one person for about one hour. You can speak English or Russian at the interview, whatever works best for you. You might be invited for a shorter follow-up interview if you agree to.

### **Why was I invited to participate?**

You were selected for participation in the project because you lived in the USSR (or an ex-USSR country) and because you are/were an academic staff member or researcher in a South Australian higher education institution.

### **Possible benefits from the study, to the participants and the community**

- An opportunity for you to share your experience and your views of your migration to Australia, settlement and work in South Australian higher education institution.
- Review of existing orientation information processes for overseas academic and research staff of a higher education institution.
- Information for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) and Immigration SA skilled migration policies, higher education institution employment and multicultural policies.

### **Can I withdraw from the project?**

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time. You are not obliged to answer any questions you feel might be too personal or intrusive.

### **Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?**

We believe there are no foreseeable risks, side effects, emotional distress, discomforts, inconveniences or restrictions, either immediate or later, that you are likely to experience.

**Measures that will be taken in the event of an adverse event**

You can ask for the interview to be stopped at any time and the researcher will immediately discontinue the conversation. You can also avoid answering particular questions if you feel they are too personal or intrusive or you may choose not share your opinion or memories on certain topics. You can withdraw from the study at any time without detriment to you in any way, as your participation is entirely voluntary.

**What will happen to my information?**

The information that you provide, project records and raw data will be stored securely in encrypted format and backed up to the University of Adelaide secure servers. All data and information will be stored and viewed on a password and firewall protected university computer. A copy will be kept off-site by the principal supervisor. Study data and information be shared only with study supervisors. Information and data collected will be kept 5 years after the last publication based on the data. Participants will not be identified in publications, as only aggregated data will be published. A summary of the results will be made available to you if you are interested.

**Assurance of confidentiality**

All your details will be kept strictly confidential. Pseudonyms/codes will be assigned to every participant. Your higher education institution would not be named in a way that could be associated with you. No findings which could identify any individual participant will be published, and your privacy will be protected at all stages of the research.

**Consent Required**

Your participation in this research requires your consent: you will be provided with a participant consent form prior to the interview.

**What if I have a complaint or any concerns?**

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number H-2014-xxx). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. Contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to [hrec@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:hrec@adelaide.edu.au) if you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

**Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?**

Dr. Cally Guerin	<a href="mailto:cally.guerin@adelaide.edu.au">cally.guerin@adelaide.edu.au</a> ,	ph. 08 8313 3043
Dr. Ian Green	<a href="mailto:ian.green@adelaide.edu.au">ian.green@adelaide.edu.au</a> ,	ph. 08 8313 6113
Anna Morozov	<a href="mailto:anna.morozov@adelaide.edu.au">anna.morozov@adelaide.edu.au</a>	ph. 08 8313 6064

**SIGNATURES:**

## **ИНФОРМАЦИОННАЯ БРОШЮРА**

**Название исследовательского проекта:**

### **Иммигранты стран бывшего СССР и их работа в высших учебных заведениях Южной Австралии**

**Отвественный за проведение исследования: Анна Морозов**

#### **Цели и задачи исследования**

Основной задачей исследования является определение долгосрочных и краткосрочных последствий иммиграции из стран бывшего СССР на академическую карьеру работника сферы высшего образования. Фокусом данного исследования являются преподаватели и научно-исследовательские работники высших учебных заведений Южной Австралии.

Предполагается, что данное исследование предоставит информацию для разработки иммиграционной политики и управлению делами университета. Выводы и рекомендации исследования будут использованы для разработки программ привлечения и устройства на работу в университеты Австралии преподавателей и ученых из разных стран мира и для сохранения их национального опыта и поддержки поликультурной среде в ВУЗе.

#### **Что будут делать участники исследования?**

Вам предлагается поделиться своими воспоминаниями и ощущениями, связанными с иммиграцией в Австралию и работой в сфере высшего образования Южной Австралии. Вы сможете вспомнить трудности и победы, поделиться вашим опытом, рассказать про достижения. Вы приглашаетесь на беседу с исследователем, длительностью около часа. На интервью Вам предлагается использовать русский или английский язык, как вам нравится. С вашего согласия Вас могут попросить поучаствовать во втором, более коротком интервью для уточнения некоторых ваших ответов.

#### **Почему меня пригласили участвовать в проекте?**

Вас пригласили участвовать в исследовании потому, что вы жили или в СССР или в стране бывшего СССР и потому что вы работали/работаете в системе высшего образования Южной Австралии в качестве преподавателя и/или научно-исследовательского работника.

#### **Что вы/ваша национальная община получит от участия в исследовании**

- Возможность поговорить о проблемах иммиграции и поделиться своим опытом и точкой зрения по поводу первых шагов иммигрантов по приезду в Австралию, а также вашими взглядами на работу в высших учебных заведениях Южной Австралии.
- Возможность участия в пересмотре существующих инструкций по оказанию помощи и поддержки прибывшим на работу в университеты Австралии преподавателей и ученых из разных стран мира.
- Возможность оказать помощь в сборе информации для департамента иммиграции и Immigration SA для разработки более приближенных к жизни иммиграционных программ и инструкций, а также для укрепления многоязычного и поликультурного общества.

#### **Могу ли я прекратить участие в исследовании?**

Ваше участие в исследовании совершенно добровольно. Вы можете дать согласие на участие в нем, а потом отказаться от участия в любой момент. Также в течение собеседования вы можете не отвечать на те вопросы, которые, по вашему мнению, являются слишком личными или вам просто не нравятся.

#### **Существуют ли как-то риски, связанные с моим участием в исследовании?**

Мы считаем, что участие в данном исследовании не вызовет никаких последствий, не вызовет побочных эффектов и не приведет к стрессу, дискомфорту или неприятному эмоциональному

## ИНФОРМАЦИОННАЯ БРОШЮРА

состоянию. Мы не предполагаем изменений вашего состояния ни в момент собеседования, ни после него.

### Меры при возникновении непредвиденных рисков

В любой момент вы можете попросить исследователя прекратить беседу. Вы можете уклониться от ответа на те вопросы, которые вы сочтете очень личными или неприятными. Вы можете решить не делиться своими воспоминаниями по определенным темам. Вы можете прекратить свое участие в исследовании в любой момент, потому что ваше участие в исследовании совершенно добровольное.

### Что будет с информацией, которую я предоставил?

Информация, которая была вами предоставлена в ходе исследования, записи и данные будут храниться в закодированном виде на сервере университета Аделаиды. Любая информация по проекту будет просматриваться только с университетского компьютера, оснащенного средствами защиты информации от несанкционированного доступа. Одна копия криптографированной информации по проекту будет храниться у руководителя проекта. Вся информация и данные будут храниться в течение 5 лет после последней публикации, основанной на этих данных. Конфиденциальность и неприкосновенность передаваемой нам информации полностью защищена. Участникам исследования будут присвоены псевдонимы или коды и их настоящие имена не будут упоминаться нигде. В публикацию пойдут только обобщенные выводы по полученным данным. Вам будет предложено просмотреть краткое содержание выводов до их опубликования.

### Ваша конфиденциальность

Вся информация, переданная нам, подлежит защите от утечек и конфиденциальному хранению. Каждому участнику будет присвоен личный код или псевдоним. Высшее учебное заведение, в котором вы работаете или работали, также не будет упоминаться так, чтобы это можно было бы связать с вашим именем или практикой. Ничего, что смогло бы помочь идентифицировать настоящего участника исследования не будет публиковаться. Ваше право на неприкосновенность частной жизни будет защищено на всех этапах проведения исследования.

### Требуется ваше согласие

Для того, чтобы принять участие в данном исследовании, вам надо подписать форму согласия на участие в исследовании, которая будет вам предоставлена перед собеседованием.

### Куда идти жаловаться?

Проведение данного исследования было разрешено комитетом по вопросам соблюдения этики университета Аделаиды (номер разрешения Н-2014-xxx). Если у вас возникли вопросы или проблемы в связи с вашим практическим участием в данном исследовании, или вы хотите выразить свою озабоченность или жалобу, связанную с проектом, пожалуйста, сначала свяжитесь с главным исследователем. Ваше право, как участника исследования, звонить в секретариат комитета по делам этики отдела исследований человека по телефону (08) 8313 6028 или написать сообщение по адресу [hrec@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:hrec@adelaide.edu.au) в том случае, если вы хотите поговорить с независимым человеком о ваших жалобах или опасениях относительно данного проекта. Любые жалобы, связанные с проведением исследования, будут рассмотрены с сохранением вашей конфиденциальности и ситуации, описанные вами, будут полностью расследованы. Вам будет сообщено о результате расследования.

### К кому я могу обратиться с вопросами по проекту?

Dr. Cally Guerin	<a href="mailto:cally.guerin@adelaide.edu.au">cally.guerin@adelaide.edu.au</a> , ph. 08 8313 3043
Dr. Ian Green	<a href="mailto:ian.green@adelaide.edu.au">ian.green@adelaide.edu.au</a> , ph. 08 8313 6113
Anna Morozov	<a href="mailto:anna.morozov@adelaide.edu.au">anna.morozov@adelaide.edu.au</a> , ph. 08 8313

ПОДПИСИ:









## СОГЛАСИЕ

1. Я прочел содержание приложенной Информационной Брошюры и даю свое согласие на участие в данном исследовательском проекте.

Название:	Иммигранты стран бывшего СССР и их работа в высших учебных заведениях Южной Австралии
Номер разрешения от Комитета по Этике:	H-2014-207

2. Исследователь полностью объяснил мне задачи проекта и возможные последствия моего участия в нем. Я даю свое добровольное согласие на участие в исследовании.

3. Несмотря на то, что я понимаю цели и задачи проекта, я также понимаю, что мое участие в исследовании может не принести лично мне никакой выгоды.

4. Мне объяснено, что несмотря на то, что данные исследования будут опубликованы, информация обо мне останется конфиденциальной и мои личные данные не будут переданы никому без моего личного согласия.

5. Я понимаю, что могу в любой момент принять решение о прекращении участия в исследовании.

6. Я даю свое согласие на проведение аудио-записи интервью. Да  Нет

7. Я понимаю, что я должен сохранить копию этого согласия после его подписания и Информационную Брошюру.

### Заполняется участником:

Имя: \_\_\_\_\_ Подпись: \_\_\_\_\_ Дата: \_\_\_\_\_

### Заполняется исследователем/свидетелем:

Я объяснил цели и задачи исследования \_\_\_\_\_  
(внести имя участника)

и я считаю, что он понял мои объяснения.

Подпись: \_\_\_\_\_ Позиция: \_\_\_\_\_ Дата: \_\_\_\_\_

**RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Fieldwork Stage** : Interview

**Data Identity**

Code :

Date :

Site/Venue :

Duration : ± 60 minutes

Interviewees : Academic / Research staff

**Interview Goal**

To explore participant's perception of the long and short-term challenges and benefits, consequences and impacts of academic migration on the ex-USSR academic migrants, working for/retired from a higher education institution of South Australia.

**Type of Interview**

Semi-structured; one-to-one

**Language Used**

English or Russian Language

**Nature of Interview Questions**

The following questions can be elaborated depending on the respondent's responses:

	<b>Topics and Questions</b>	<b>Possible follow up questions</b>
	What language do you prefer we use today – English or Russian?	Any reasons?
<b>1.</b>	<b>Demographic details</b>	
	What is your age?	
	What is your country of origin (where have you migrated from)?	
	Do you still have close family, friends or work connections back there?	
	Before migration to South Australia, what was your academic and/or research status?	Past achievements and challenges
	What is your discipline/field of research?	Any publications?
	Can you briefly tell me about the history of your career?	Expected future career if have not migrated to Australia?
	What higher education institution(s) of Australia and South Australia have you ever worked at?	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Migration to Australia</b>	
	What were your motivations to migrate to Australia?	Role of colleagues, family, country profile, political situation, beliefs?
	Tell me about migration opportunities/pathways available/known to you at the time? (Skilled immigration, any other government	Which one did you rely upon and use?

	programs, recruitment agency program, university network & support, etc).	
	What was the role of SA state government in your migration? Why did you choose to live and work in South Australia?	
	Did you go straight into the university sector when you arrived to Australia?	Describe your way, please
	What did you expect it would be like working in Australian higher education institution?	Sources of any preliminary information
	Did you want to move 'back to USSR' at any time?	Reasons
<b>3.</b>	<b>On arrival &amp; settlement</b>	
	What sort of workplace orientation did you receive at the HEd institution? Was it useful and effective?	What would be really useful?
	What sort of settling in issues did you face both at work and at home?	What support would be useful? If available at the time – would you use it?
	From your perspective, what were the positives and negatives of your first year in SA?	Ways to avoid problems?
	Do you feel like you are a part of an ex-USSR migrant community?	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Work in HEd institution</b>	
	Have you noticed any differences in higher education systems, attitudes, teaching styles, research expectations between your home country and Australia?	Describe in detail, please
	How has the new institution acknowledged what you have brought as (ex)USSR academic (eg. different intellectual traditions, research expertise in the particular field)	Describe in detail, please
	What sort of continuity/disruption in your academic career did you experience as a result of migration here?	Describe in detail, please
	Did you have to re-establish yourself as an academic in Australia? How did you do it?	Why?
	Have you ever felt yourself being a part of Russian research and academic diaspora?	Could you tell me more about that?
	Do you see yourself as an Australian researcher or as a Russian researcher or as both?	
	Have you maintained research collaborations with ex-USSR colleagues/institutions?	How?
	How do you establish and maintain international research collaborations?	Have they changed since your migration?
	How do you feel about being a non-native English speaker? Does/did it influence the way you work?	Achievements and challenges?
	What are your career advancement plans?	What makes you feel that way?

5.	Reflections and ideas to share	
	What are the positive and negative sides to living and working in South Australia?	Describe, please
	What do/did you like and dislike at your work environment?	Some of your reasons for liking/not liking it?
	In your opinion, what benefits and challenges does academic migration present to the higher education institution?	
	What might motivate academic staff to move to another state/country after they have worked for a SA higher education institution?	
	In your opinion, what could a higher education institution do to retain academic and research staff?	
	In your opinion, what can a higher education institution do to make the orientation and settlement processes better for the overseas academic and research staff?	
	What would be an ideal migration experience to migrate to work in an Australian higher education institution?	
	Do you have any other comments?	



## ПРОТОКОЛ ПРОВЕДЕНИЯ ИНТЕРВЬЮ

Стадия проекта : Интервью

### Данные участника

Код/псевдоним :  
Дата проведения :  
Место проведения :  
Длительность : ± 60 minutes  
Беседу проводит :

### Цель интервью

Исследовать понимание участником краткосрочных и долгосрочных достоинств, недостатков и мотивов иммиграции и выявить их влияние на академического иммигранта из стран бывшего СССР и его работу и карьеру в ВУЗе Южной Австралии.

### Тип интервью

Полу-структурированный, один-на один с исследователем

### Language Used

Английский или русский

### Примерные темы и вопросы интервью

Приведенные ниже вопросы можно расширить, в зависимости от данного участником ответа:

	Темы и вопросы	Вероятные продолжения
	На каком языке вы хотите говорить сегодня – по английски или по русски?	Почему такой выбор?
1.	<b>Общая информации участника</b>	
	Сколько вам лет?	
	Из какой страны вы иммигрировали?	
	Остались ли там родственники, коллеги, друзья?	
	До вашей иммиграции в Австралию – какой академический статус у вас был?	Прежние достижения, проблемы
	В какой области науки вы специализируетесь?	Публикации?
	Опишите, пожалуйста, вкратце, ваш рабочий путь (карьеру) до иммиграции в Австралию.	Предположительная карьера, если бы не переехали в Австралию?



	В каких высших учебных заведениях Австралии и Южной Австралии вы работали?	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Иммиграция в Австралию</b>	
	Почему вы решили иммигрировать в Австралию? Мотивация.	Роль коллег, семьи, друзей, профиля страны, политической ситуации, веры?
	Расскажите, пожалуйста, о тех возможностях иммиграции, о которых вам было известно до вашей миграции? (например – независимая иммиграция, государственная программа, программа по воссоединению семей, набор на работу, академические контакты, и т.д.).	Что из них вы пробовали и использовали на практике?
	Какова была роль правительства штата Южная Австралия в вашей иммиграции? Почему вы выбрали жить в Южной Австралии?	
	Вы сразу нашли работу в университете, когда приехали в Австралию?	Когда вы начали работу в ВУЗе?
	Какие предположения о работе в Австралийском ВУЗе у вас были до начала работы в нем?	Источники информации?
	Возникало ли у вас желание все бросить и вернуться?	Причины?
<b>3.</b>	<b>Прибытие и обустройство жизни</b>	
	Когда вы прибыли на работу, какая программа по ориентации на рабочем месте была вам предложена в университете? Была ли от нее польза?	Что могло бы быть полезнее?
	Какие сложные моменты вы испытали при обустройстве как на работе, так и дома?	Какая помощь пригодилась бы?
	С вашей точки зрения, какие положительные и отрицательные черты вашей миграции вы можете вспомнить, если говорить о первых годах в Австралии?	Как можно было избежать проблем?
	Чувствуете ли вы себя частью сообщества экс-советских иммигрантов?	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Работа в ВУЗе (Южная Австралия)</b>	
	Заметили ли вы какую-нибудь разницу между организацией процесса преподавания между университетами, отношением к делу и между коллегами, стилями обучения, и т.д.?	Опишите свои наблюдения
	Как австралийский ВУЗ воспринял ваш “академический багаж” (например, различие традиций, методов, ваш	Опишите свои наблюдения

	опыт)	
	Прервалась ли ваша карьера в результате вашей миграции в Австралию?	Опишите свои наблюдения
	Пришлось ли вам себя утверждать в Австралии? Если да, то каким образом?	Почему?
	Случалось вам почувствовать себя частью общества русской научной мысли (русская диаспора)	
	Как вы себя воспринимаете – как австралийский преподаватель/исследователь или как русский или как и тот и другой одновременно?	Почему?
	Поддерживаете ли вы научные контакты с вашими прежними коллегами и местами работ?	Каким образом?
	Как вы сегодня устанавливаете научные контакты и организовываете группы по интересам?	Изменились ли методы с тех пор, как вы иммигрировали?
	Вы не являетесь носителем английского языка. Отражается ли это на вашей работе?	Достижения и трудности?
	Какие ваши планы по продвижению в карьере?	Почему вы так думаете?
<b>5.</b>	<b>Размышления на тему, идеи</b>	
	Как вы думаете, что положительного и отрицательного в жизни и работе в Южной Австралии?	Опишите, пожалуйста
	Что вам нравится и что не нравится на работе?	Причины?
	По вашему мнению, что позитивного и негативного может дать иммиграция ВУЗу?	
	Что может выступить стимулом для возвращения 'академиков' в другой штат/страну после того, как они поработали в ВУЗе Южной Австралии?	
	Как вы считаете, что может сделать ВУЗ для удержания преподавателей/исследователей в штате?	
	По вашему мнению, что может изменить ВУЗ, для того, чтобы сделать процесс ориентации и обустройства иностранных специалистов лучше?	
	Как бы вы описали идеальный способ иммиграции для работы в ВУЗе?	
	Есть ли у вас любые комментарии по теме?	



**The University of Adelaide  
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)**

*This document is for people who are participants in a research project.*

**CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS  
PROCEDURE**

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee:

<b>Project Title:</b>	<b>Ex-USSR academic migrants in South Australian higher education institutions.</b>
<b>Approval Number:</b>	<b>H-2014-207</b>

The Human Research Ethics Committee monitors all the research projects which it has approved. The committee considers it important that people participating in approved projects have an independent and confidential reporting mechanism which they can use if they have any worries or complaints about that research.

This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (see <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>).

1. If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the project co-ordinator:

<b>Dr. Cally Guerin</b>	<b><a href="mailto:cally.guerin@adelaide.edu.au">cally.guerin@adelaide.edu.au</a></b>	<b>08 8313 3043</b>
<b>Dr. Ian Green</b>	<b><a href="mailto:ian.green@adelaide.edu.au">ian.green@adelaide.edu.au</a></b>	<b>08 8313 6113</b>
<b>Anna Morozov</b>	<b><a href="mailto:anna.morozov@adelaide.edu.au">anna.morozov@adelaide.edu.au</a></b>	<b>08 8313 6064</b>

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person matters related to:

- making a complaint, or
- raising concerns on the conduct of the project, or
- the University policy on research involving human participants, or
- your rights as a participant,

please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on phone (08) 8313 6028 or by email to [hrec@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:hrec@adelaide.edu.au).

## Appendix 6

Email text:



**Dear Sir/Madam,**

**Have you migrated to Australia from the USSR or an ex-USSR country?**

**Have you ever worked in higher education / research before migrating to Australia?**

**Have you ever worked in higher education in South Australia?**

If you answered “Yes” to all the questions, you are invited to participate in a study

**Ex-USSR academic migrants in South Australian higher education,**

conducted by the University of Adelaide researches.

We are interested in exploring the experiences of ex-USSR academic and research staff who have moved to Australia and adapted to the new working and living environment.

The research aims to discover long- and short-term challenges and benefits, consequences and impacts of migration on ex-USSR academic migrants. Our focus is on academic staff and researchers who are working or have worked for South Australian higher education institutions.

We would like to invite you to share your migration and work ‘ups and downs’ with us in a friendly and confidential environment. You can choose to speak Russian or English. A researcher will conduct a one-to-one confidential interview with you, which will last for about an hour. It will be audio-recorded to be transcribed, so that later you can check how accurately your words have been written down. If agreed, you might also be invited for a shorter second interview.

If you are interested in participating, please email [anna.morozov@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:anna.morozov@adelaide.edu.au) or call **08 8313 6064**, indicating that you would like to take part in the research. Times and places for interviews will be arranged to mutual convenience.

This research requires participant consent. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any stage or avoid answering questions which you feel are too personal or intrusive. A decision not to participate or withdraw will not affect your employment in any way. No findings which could identify any individual participant will be published, and your privacy will be protected at all stages of the research.

Thank you.

**Anna Morozov**

**School of Education  
University of Adelaide  
Ph: 08 8313 6064**

Flyer/Letter text:

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

**Have you migrated to Australia from the USSR or an ex-USSR country?**

**Have you ever worked in higher education / research before migrating to Australia?**

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Thank you.

**Anna Morozov**

**School of Education  
University of Adelaide  
Ph: 08 8313 6064**

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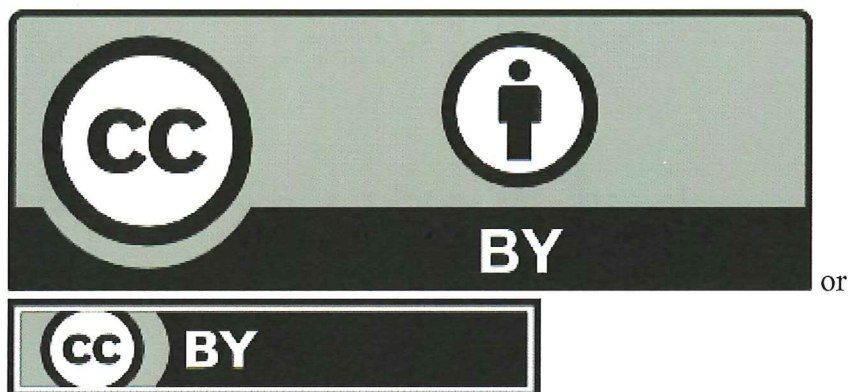
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