Acculturation and psychological well-being of immigrants from post-Soviet countries in New Zealand

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Viktoriia Volkova

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Abstract

This qualitative research provides insights into the life experiences of Post-Soviet immigrants in New Zealand regarding the process of acculturation and its effects on their mental health. The acculturation process is analysed through the lenses of socio-historical context and social practices. Thematic analysis of 14 in-depth interviews with immigrants from Post-Soviet countries provided seven themes. Themes address cultural differences, employment, alienation and other emotional outcomes, changes, home and relationships left behind, the Russian-speaking community in NZ, and discrimination. The findings highlight the importance of considering practices of emotional expression embedded in culture and its influence on the acculturation process. The limitations of Berry's fourfold model of acculturation are also indicated. Based on negative and positive practices identified, recommendations are provided to mental health workers, psychologists and other professionals working with this immigrant group.

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Chapter 1: Theories of Acculturation and Psychological well-being of immigrants from post-Soviet countries

Introduction

This chapter considers theories of acculturation and psychological well-being in relation to immigrants from post-Soviet countries. This is in order to then explore the way this group experiences acculturation and the challenges they face which may affect their psychological wellbeing. The first part of this chapter outlines common theories and models of acculturation including the fourfold acculturation model, stage models of acculturation, and the concepts of culture shock and acculturation stress. After this, the relationship between acculturation, identity, and existential anxiety are described and discussed. Special attention is paid to the socio-historical context, collective practices that influence the process of acculturation and identity issues among immigrants. The second part of the chapter highlights the relationship between acculturation and mental health. Finally, specific international and NZ research concerning post-Soviet immigrants is discussed to indicate the main issues and gaps in knowledge related to this group, as well as the need to contribute to the data available on this group in NZ.

Nowadays, immigration is "at the heart of globalization" and responsible for considerable large-scale social change (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2014, p. viii). The number of international migrants[1] worldwide has reached approximately 215 million people (around 3% of global population) with a large proportion of immigrants concentrated in developed countries in the mid-2010s (Borjas, 2014). NZ is a good example of such a developed country with 27.4 % of its citizens being born overseas (Stats NZ, 2020). The Ministry of Social Development (2008) note that immigrants from different cultural backgrounds change NZ's society considerably, influencing social wellbeing in the country and, therefore, there is an ongoing need for research in this area to improve social and community wellbeing.

This influx has been a recent development in the history of NZ. Around four decades ago, the immigration trends in NZ were very different (Bellamy, 2008). There were

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[1] According to the Dietz (2010), an immigrant is a person who has moved to a country other than their country of origin for a long period of time and has received the right to reside in the country of migration (that is, it is not necessary to have citizenship).

fewer immigrants in the country and retaining citizens was declining through emigration. Between the 1980's and 1990's the number of permanent and long-term immigrants into NZ was 380,000. (United Nations, 2013). Though immigration had increased over this period there was a notable decline from 1984 to 1985, this recovering by 1986 (United Nations, 2013). This was partly due to policy changes that occurred in that year causing a new influx of immigrants from around the world (Ministry of Social Development, 2008).

According to Bellamy (2008), NZ immigration policy until 1986 paid great attention to the ethnic origin of immigrants and their nationality. The Immigration Policy Review of 1986 and the Immigration Act 1987 that followed, changed the focus from these ethnic factors and they ceased to be significant, with the new focus being on immigrants' skills and matching professions to an Occupational Priority List. As well as this, the legislative changes introduced a new important criterion for the selection of immigrants, namely, those with an interest in investing in NZ and/or working in a business sector. However, no changes were made in regards to Australian citizens and permanent residents, who were allowed to move freely between Australia and NZ as before. This indicates that there still was inequality towards different migrant groups.

Around two decades after the adoption of the Immigration Act 1987, the average annual increase in immigrants in NZ has grown and reached 12,000 (United Nations, 2013). The percentage of residents who were born overseas grew in the following years, reaching 25.2% in 2013 (Stats NZ, 2020). According to the 2018 Census there were five prevalent ethnic groups identified among the population in NZ: "Asian, European, Maori, Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA), and Pacific" (Stats NZ, 2020, para.23). However, each of these groupings contains a diversity of communities, with about a quarter of residents being born abroad, with migrants from Asia making up a considerable group of migrants since the 1980s (Stats NZ, 2020).

Despite NZ accepting immigrants since the 1980s, the country's mental health system has not catered to their needs (Patterson et al., 2018). Migrants and others dealing with serious distress are often not able to access adequate help, there is a lack of services suitable for the diverse cultures of immigrants with financial issues partly being a contributing factor (Patterson et al., 2018). This is a serious issue, since life expectancy

of those with severe mental health issues can be reduced by up to 25 years (Patterson et al., 2018).

The needs and practices of many ethnic groups in NZ have been under researched, possibly as a result of these groups only comprising small populations (Maydell, 2010). The current thesis will focus on one of these ethnic communities, namely, Russian-speaking immigrants arrived from Post-Soviet countries. The purpose of this research is to investigate the acculturation experiences of immigrants to NZ from post-Soviet countries with a specific focus as to how immigration has affected their psychological wellbeing. This research will contribute insights into the unique challenges facing immigrants from former Soviet countries which can be potentially used to effectively support such immigrants in psychological assistance situations. Stated more specifically, using semi-structured interviews, the research aims to gain greater insight into the following:

> Which immigration experiences do immigrants from former-Soviet countries identify as having improved or hindered their acculturation process?

> How have these experiences changed for immigrants across time as they have continued to stay in NZ?

Theories and models of acculturation

Adaptation to a new cultural environment for immigrants involves interactions with locals and thus acquiring new behavioural patterns as well as absorbing knowledge and gaining experiences in this new environment (Ward et al., 2001). This process can be very stressful for immigrants who may be at increased risk for poor mental health and psychological distress (Ward et al., 2001).

The fourfold acculturation model

An initial dominant theory, the process of adaptation was examined within the acculturation theory model proposed by Berry (1997), where four acculturation strategies followed by immigrants were proposed:

- integration – maintaining the existing culture as well as integrating some features of the host culture (Berry et al., 2003; Ward et al., 2001)
- marginalisation – the disengagement from both the culture of origin and the settlement culture (Berry et al., 2003; Ward et al., 2001)

- assimilation – the immigrant refuses the culture of origin and acquires the new cultural identity of the host (Berry et al., 2003; Ward et al., 2001)
- separation – rejection of the new culture in favour of the culture of origin (Berry et al., 2003; Ward et al., 2001)

However, there is increasing critique of this theory, for instance, Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. (2011) argue that integration and assimilation strategies are not always beneficial as proclaimed by many authors and may depend on the current situation in the 'host' country. They claim that depending on the context, any of the strategies can be advantageous in a multicultural country. It is also suggested for future researchers to consider time, place and the ways in which acculturation orientations influence the process of adaptation in order to gain better understanding of the phenomena (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011). Since acculturation is a process, understanding it as a set of distinct, static strategies may be not useful as they seem to be more fluid and context bound.

Acculturation stress and culture shock

The results of acculturation may be divided into two categories: sociocultural and psychological adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). The first is defined as the capability to blend into the new cultural environment, while the latter is more focused on the sense of wellbeing (Searle & Ward, 1990). Berry and Annis (1974) explored unfavourable psychosomatic and psychological outcomes of acculturation through the lens of stress, introducing the notion of acculturative stress. This phenomenon is defined as a psychological reaction to a new unfamiliar culture, customs and social norms (Ward et al., 2001). Associated significant psychological difficulties, include depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation (Finch & Vega, 2003; Hovey, 2000; Hovey & Seligman, 2006). In addition to acculturative stress, the notion of 'culture shock' has also often been used to describe aspects of migrant experience (Ward et. al., 2001). Both terms have a similar meaning, however, according to Berry (2006), culture shock is associated with negative stressful experiences while acculturation stress includes both positive and negative stress.

Stage models of acculturation

Oberg (1960) was the first to refer to culture shock, defining this as the result of losing the predictability of social intercourse and roles while being in contact with

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a new culture. Drawing, in part, from Oberg's work, Adler (1975) portrayed culture shock as a five-stage process, where the first stage (the honeymoon stage) is characterised by feeling hope for a better future and being excited and curious much like a tourist, with the same cultural identity as before moving to the new cultural environment. The next stage (the disintegration stage) is often overwhelming due to new cultural experiences and rules, as well as due to feeling inadequate and blaming the self. Then, reintegration involves feelings of anger and resentment; however, functionality improves due to familiarisation with the new cultural environment. The anger of this stage is often projected outward which interferes with the opportunity of getting necessary help. This is followed by the autonomy stage which is associated with moving towards autonomy and comprehension of negative and positive characteristics of the original and the acquired cultures. The last stage of reciprocal interdependence means achieving biculturality and integrating the new cultural identity.

Similar to Adler's model, the U-curve model (Lysgaard, 1955) has honeymoon and disillusionment stages, followed by the adjustment stage which is similar to the reintegration and autonomy stages of Adler. The last stage of the U-curve model, called the mastery stage, has the same characteristics as interdependence as defined by Adler (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). The W-curve model (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963) approximates the U-curve model, however its main difference is that it considers not only adaptation to a new culture, but also readjustment to the culture of origin (Brein & David, 1971).

It cannot be denied that stage-models have many limitations. For instance, Oberg (1960) portrayed culture shock as an "occupational disease" (Brein & David, 1971), which, according to Dulebohn (1991), appears to be debilitating, but the potential advantages associated with acculturation have not been given sufficient attention (as cited in McLeod, 2008). Other models such as the U-curve and W-curve models also fail to take into account the positive effects of acculturation (McLeod, 2008). Despite the fact that a W-curve function may describe the adaptation process on a larger scale (Brein & David, 1971), such models, as models, are simplified depictions that may not take into account other factors, such as personal characteristics of people and their impact on the adaptation process (Leong & Chou, 1996). All of these models only

address part of the lived reality of immigrants and thus relying on only one model makes it is difficult to understand the phenomenon in its entirety (Befus, 1988).

The ABCs of acculturation

After further research and development in this area, Ward et al. (2001) categorised responses to culture shock through a psychological model defined as the ABCs of acculturation, which included three main categories. Firstly, affect (A) includes coping with stress and psychological adjustment and is based on a stress and coping framework. This approach examines the relationship between stress, life changes, the choice of certain coping strategies and different variables involved in cultural transition (e.g. cultural differences, social support, personality, acculturation status). Next, behaviour (B) relies on a culture learning process and explains whether the person acquires and gains specific skills which would potentially lead to their socio-cultural adaptation. This approach is associated with behavioural transformation during cultural learning. Lastly, cognitions (C) are viewed within the framework of social identity theories proposed by Abrams and Hogg (1990) and Deaux (1996). This approach explores identity processes such as maintaining, developing and changing identity (Ward et al., 2001). These theories are based on the peculiarities of information processing associated with their own or other group, which is also associated with self-perception and the perception of other people including inter-group perceptions and the concept of cultural identity (Ward et al., 2001).

Limitations of the existing acculturation models

Despite the abundance of theoretical models related to the acculturation process, many researchers do not consider the socio-historical context, risking missing such contextual aspects in relation to the meaning systems involved. Most of them focus more on individuals or members of a minority group without considering international relationships between collectively managed social and political forces (Bowskill et al., 2007). For instance, many authors do not pay attention to collective practices and norms that facilitate the choice of acculturation strategies, focusing instead on the individual choice of these strategies, which makes it impossible to understand the process of acculturation on a larger scale (Bowskill et al., 2007).

Collective practices can be resilient even in a situation of significant change (Lawson, 2016) and thus are important for consideration in acculturation research. The

mainstream models tend not to acknowledge the political history and context that migrants bring with them and enter into. Furthermore, it is also important to take into account the political trends associated with xenophobia and hostility towards migrants, causing fear of migrants among the population (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). In addition to the fear associated with terrorism and extremism, there are other emotive problems as a result of the social policy of multiculturalism which need to me considered in future research (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). This links to the issue of the stereotyping of migrant groups, which can be exacerbated by the media, resulting in prejudice and discrimination (Esses et al., 2013). Racial prejudice may lead host country citizens to feel threatened and ultimately to support discriminatory policies (Pereira et al., 2010). As much as such prejudice affects the emotions of large groups towards a particular race or ethnicity (Stets, 2010), it of course negatively affects the emotional lives and acculturation processes of immigrants in turn (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015).

Migration and identity

It is a sad fact that throughout world history, many people have gone through periods of abrupt change in their usual way of life due to colonisation, war, and changes to country borders (Duff, 2015). Some countries that existed in the past disappeared almost overnight and became part of other nations or new states. The disadvantaged situation often arising for populations in the country of origin, have contributed to the migration process. Consequently, all this has led to the fact that people have moved to new environments with different cultural and political characteristics, adapting themselves to transnational ways of life (Duff, 2015). Migrants can experience quite acute difficulties in determining their belonging to one group or another – with consequences for their sense of identity (Duff, 2015).

In this research, we define identity as a construct composed of different parts that coordinate with each other under the influence of the social environment and interaction with other members of society (Leavy & Smith, 2008). The connection between identity, culture and territory has become more complicated in recent times with national identity "gradually losing its hegemony" as well as more people migrating and often having a more mixed ethnic background (Kolossov, 1999, p.72). Modern migrants are often actively involved in a myriad of social, economic and cultural lives, operating not only as locals or migrants, but as transnationals, involved

in both their societies of origin and settlement and maintaining contact with their homeland (through travels, mobile devices and online communication) whilst building relationships in their new environment (Darvin & Norton, 2014). In relation to understanding the shift in migrant identities, this may be especially pronounced among those who have had to learn and use a new language (Darvin & Norton, 2014). According to Spickard (2013), many migrants thus can be best understood as having multiple identities at the same time, which can be transformed and shift through life.

A notion related to understanding this multiple aspect of migrant identity is hybrid identity (Duff, 2015). Hybrid identity appears when the elements of the default identity are transforming through interaction with new social environment forming a new expanded version of the initial identity (Leavy & Smith, 2008). Thus, identities associated with the country of birth and the new country blend to form a new hybrid identity (Rockquemore et al., 2009). This often appears in members of populations who live outside of the borders of their homeland, but still share the same national identity while having a desire to also fit into their new environment (Ang, 2003). Leavy and Smith (2008) also refer to the internal colony hybrid, which refers to the hybrid identities of those who have been colonised or forced to assimilate and who live within the boundaries of the other identity group.

The similar notion of 'cosmopolitan identity' refers to when persons identify themselves more as a citizen of the world and maintain a cross-cultural lifestyle and values (Grinstein & Wathieu, 2012). Grinstein and Wathieu (2012) proposed that the difference between cosmopolitans and non-cosmopolitans in terms of their understanding of well-being is that the former strive for a global lifestyle.

Berman et al. (2006) argue that identity problems can be aggravated by existential anxiety, which in turn is associated with various manifestations of anxiety and depression. The existential anxiety of immigrants is associated with changes in identity and identity conflicts during the period of cultural transition, as they try to answer questions related to who they are in a new environment (Bardhi, 2001). Existential anxiety also includes extensive thinking on what human life means and its finitude (Weems et al., 2004). However, the influence of existential anxiety on someone's emotional well-being and experience is not yet well understood (Berman et al., 2006).

Acculturation and mental health

The issue of immigrants' mental health and its changes are widely covered topics in acculturation research. However, the relationship between migration and the emergence of mental health problems is not clear (Lindert et al., 2009; Rogler et al., 1991). Despite an abundance of research, the emerging and existing data is rather limited. The results and the process of adaptation depend on the level and prevalence of various mental illnesses among different groups of migrants (Bhugra, 2004). Existing data related to labour migrants focuses on the relationship between migration and schizophrenia and psychosis, while researchers concerned with refugees tend to be more interested in the connection between migration and post-traumatic stress disorder (Lindert et al., 2009). Interestingly, there is some evidence that labour migrants are less likely to have anxiety and depression compared to local residents, but that refugees are at greater risk of developing depression (Lindert et al., 2009).

When we talk about the mental health issues of migrants, we need to consider the full context and many factors affecting the process. According to Bhugra (2004), immigrants may have fewer health problems in their initial stages of migration due to a number of reasons including youthfulness and recent medical examinations that are sometimes compulsory for migration. But if they stay in their new environment longer, then their level of stress may increase due to the changes that the migrants may face. The reunification of migrants' family in the country of migration may also be an influential factor in determining their wellbeing and in some cases causes extra stress. However, it is important to also consider economic, labour and social factors in the settlement process when exploring the mental health issues of immigrants.

Research identifies various factors contributing to mental health issues of migrants. Some researchers attribute the deterioration in mental health in the process of acculturation to the loss of family support and subsequent increased levels of stress (Koneru et al., 2007), perceived discrimination (Greene et. al, 2006; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007), the absence of cultural competence (Oppedal & Idsoe, 2015), perception of low acceptance from hosts, lower involvement in local culture and social rejection (Mehta,1998), and humiliating social experiences (Farina et al., 1991). Van Os et al. (1996) suggest that there is a higher likelihood of psychotic disorders in ethnic minorities. Higher levels of cultural distance from the new culture can also worsen the mental health of immigrants (Bhugra, 2004).

To conclude, stage models and the fourfold acculturation models are quite simplistic, and, if not carefully utilised, can produce unreliable and overgeneralised findings. The ABCs framework provides a more comprehensive approach to understanding the acculturation process, because it considers various factors affecting immigrants. However, none of these models include the socio-historical context, political forces, and collective practices of immigrant groups. All these factors should be considered in order to gain a fuller picture of the acculturation process. In order to understand this process on different scales, it is also important to consider identity issues and transformations which many immigrants inevitably go through, as well as the mental health issues that migrants may be vulnerable to.

We now turn to consider the specific context from which immigrants from post-Soviet countries emerge.

The influence of Soviet Union

Patterns of social relations are changing around the world as people are not just moving overseas, but also "borders [are] moving across people" (Voutira, 2006, p. 380). The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 is an example of such a phenomenon, when at least twenty new borders rapidly appeared (Likhacheva et al., 2015).

According to the Funk & Wagnalls (2018), the Soviet Union used to be the largest country in the world and had borders with the greatest number of countries in history. The Soviet Union was formed after the October 1917 revolution in the Russian Empire, followed by a civil war known for its cruelty (Edele, 2019). In 1924, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was officially confirmed by the state constitution and included 15 republics (Edele, 2019). The list of republics with the general information is presented on the Table 1.

The law on citizenship in the Soviet Union made it possible to obtain Soviet citizenship for all permanent residents of the republics (Ginsburgs, 1983). These republics became separate countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of December 1991 (Soviet Socialist Republics, 2018). The table below shows information on the population number in each soviet republic in 1989 (Soviet Socialist Republics, 2018).

Table 1

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1989 (Funk & Wagnalls, 2018).

Soviet Socialist Republic	Capital	Area in 000s of sq km (in 000s of sq mi	Population (in 000s)
Armenian	Yerevan	29.8 (11.5)	3,288
Azerbaijan	Baku	86.6 (33.4)	7,038
Belorussian	Minsk	207.6 (80.2)	10,200
Estonian	Tallinn	45.1 (17.4)	1,573
Georgian	Tbilisi	69.7 (26.9)	5,443
Kazak	Alma-Ata	2717.3 (1049.2)	16,536
Kirgiz	Frunze	198.5 (76.6)	4,290
Latvian	Riga	63.7 (24.6)	2,680
Lithuanian	Vilnius	65.2 (25.2)	3,690
Moldavian	Kishinev	33.7 (13.0)	4,338
Russian	Moscow	17,075.4 (6592.8)	147,400
Tadzhik	Dushanbe	143.1 (55.3)	5,109
Turkmen	Ashkhabad	488.1 (188.5)	3,534
Ukrainian	Kiev	603.7 (233.1)	51,707
Uzbek	Tashkent	447.4 (172.7)	19,905

As for the structure of power in the USSR; this was extremely hierarchical with a high-power distance (Barton & Barton, 2011; Ericson, 1991). This means that all problematic and situations of conflict often had to be regulated by higher structures and authorities who also have the power of making final decisions (Ericson, 1991). This principle of strict hierarchy, which has also influenced the styles of organisations

in the Soviet Union, has since been found to still exist in Russian and Kazakh work environments (Barton & Barton, 2011; Muratbekova-Touron, 2002).

Cultural and ethnic characteristics of the peoples of the Soviet Union

The population of the Soviet Union included about 125 nationalities representing various religions and cultures, with schoolbooks printed in more than 50 languages (Thompson, 2019). According to Funk and Wagnalls (2018), Russian culture served as the basis for the culture of the Soviet Union. Despite that, the ruling party officially regarded all citizens as equal, regardless of their nationality, origin and religion. In addition, it was hoped that the disappearance of the class struggle due to the equalisation of all citizens would lead to the disappearance of the tensions between various ethnicities and the emergence of a new international ethnos (Cvetkovski & Hofmeister, 2013). However, all Soviet peoples were inevitably involved in each other's cultures and absorbed characteristics of these cultures (Cavoukian, 2013).

Initially, the Soviet nationality policy was aimed at unification of all people into a single state without erasing ethnic differences (Blitstein, 2006; Grant,1995). This policy was based on methods of cultural differentiation which aimed at promoting the development of the cultures and ethnic groups that made up the Soviet Union (Blitstein, 2006; Grant,1995). However, by the second half of the 1930s this changed dramatically; Blitstein (2006) arguing that the Soviet Union's approach to issues of interethnic relations culminated in contradictory practices. One approach supported diversity while another tended towards uniformity (Grant,1995).

According to Blitstein (2006), the use of non-Russian languages in management, was reduced in most places and Russian was introduced as compulsory language in education institutions. The Stalinist leadership strove to form a Soviet national community through the use of the Russian language for the effective functioning of state, economy and army. Stalin saw knowledge of the Russian language as powerful means of communication and communication between the people of the USSR, contributing to their further economic and cultural growth. Hagendoorn (1998) claimed that in reality such politics became a 'russification' (Hagendoorn,1998).

Relationships between the Peoples of the Soviet Union

Despite the presence of ethnic conflicts and various nationalist movements, some researchers argue that the Soviet Union nevertheless turned out to be a rather

cohesive state throughout almost its entire history (Bassin & Kelly, 2012). Of course, there was also hostility from some nations towards the USSR and its politics, such as from Georgians and Estonians; however the phenomenon of nostalgia of many former Soviet citizens for Soviet life can testify to the transformation of identity and the acceptance of Soviet norms and values by different groups (Suny, 2012).

According to Suny (2012), millions of citizens of the Soviet Union were ready to sacrifice to protect it, which testifies to a strong sense of affection for their new homeland. However, there were those who felt cheated after the collapse of the USSR when an alternative view of what had happened in the country during the Soviet era appeared. Suny (2012) notes that patriotism in the Soviet Union stood above nationality, which put pressure on many citizens to prioritise their loyalty to the Soviet Union rather than their ethnic and national roots. Some of them, such as Estonians, chose the path of separation when they interacted and lived mainly within their ethnic community. In contrast hundreds of thousands of Armenians assimilated, becoming more Russian in culture after one or two generations, including in language and worldview (Suny, 2012). Thus, some citizens acquired new identities, in some cases a hybrid identity arose. In post-Soviet Russia, nostalgia for the Soviet Union became a trend, with symbols inherent in the Soviet era being revived and nostalgic sentiments oft expressed in the media.

According to Beumers (2012), the need to restore lost ties with the Soviet past manifested itself in the creation of such Russian-speaking social networks as "Odnoklassniki", where it became possible to find friends and acquaintances from the Soviet past. Also, documentaries about the Soviet Union and memoirs, including in literary form, gained particular popularity. For example, the popularity of Russian TV series based on the works of Soviet classics also continues to grow. This trend of returning to the Soviet past has a social function signalling Soviet values, including promoting the importance of social connections, friends, and the team. This indicates the presence of an emotional attachment to the Soviet past, especially in Russia.

Religion

The populations and cultures of USSR had different religions, rituals and traditions before becoming a part of the Soviet Union (Hann, 2003). After that, many religious buildings were destroyed and the activities of all religious institutions related

to religious instruction were banned with rare exceptions, this lasting until 1990, when a law was introduced prohibiting state intervention in the activities of religious institutions (Funk & Wagnalls, 2018). Such a prohibition was a strategy followed by the Soviet state to rid people of the 'illusions' imposed by the previous government. Instead of religion, science was perceived as the primary way to manage and understand reality (Hann, 2003). Despite the propaganda promoting atheism, about half of the population of the Soviet Union remained believers, most of whom adhered to Russian Orthodox Christianity (Funk & Wagnalls, 2018).

Mental health attitudes in USSR

Petrea (2012) notes that the intolerant attitude towards mental problems and diseases in the Soviet Union. Mental illness was stigmatised and the person suffering from it were discriminated against, whilst abuse of patients in psychiatric institutions was well documented. The condemnation of Soviet-era psychiatrists had led them to leave the World Psychiatric Association, although in the post-Soviet period their reputation improved and only Turkmenistan and Tajikistan remain non-members of the World Psychiatric Association. However, despite these changes, the problem of discrimination against people with mental disorders in post-Soviet countries is still quite widespread (Petrea, 2012).

According to Aronson and Field (1964), the mental health program in the Soviet Union was inevitably interconnected with Marxist ideology and the cultural characteristics of Russian Empire, from which the leaders of the Soviet revolution emerged. The first feature of Soviet-Russian culture was the predominance of the interests of the group over the interests of individuals, which meant that the personal interests of citizens were viewed as secondary to the interests of the collective and the state. More than that, the issues of sexuality and sexual dysfunction were not considered a serious problem by mental health professionals. Personality development was understood as development in the process of participation in collective work, where rewards and punishments were the main levers to behaviour change.

In addition to abusive attitudes towards patients in the Soviet Union, Aronson and Field (1964) also describe a seemingly contradictory humanitarian, albeit patronising, attitude. They indicate that humanism was an important feature of Soviet culture, manifested in "extraordinary capacity, at least from the perspective of the west, on the

part of medical and psychiatric personnel to relate to patients, to display affect toward them, to love and care for them genuinely", however this was more a "humanitarianism of a parental kind" (p. 917). The peasant culture inherent in imperialist Russia and its attitude towards mentally ill people could influence such an attitude towards patients. Peasants treated a mentally unhealthy person "as perhaps endowed with a spark of divinity (he is not like other mortals)", likewise, specialists are often viewed in the position of a child who must obey and obey elders who are trying to help them (Aronson & Field, 1964, p. 917).

Conclusion

The fall of the USSR meant a significant identity shift for many (Clowes, 2011; Likhacheva et.al., 2015; Oushakine, 2000). For example, some Russians living outside of Russia after its collapse suddenly became cultural minorities in the newly emerging states (Smith & Wilson, 1997), with Voutira (2006) indicating that some Post-Soviet immigrants experienced a sense of alienation to their new territorial locations.

Thus, in considering immigrants from post-Soviet countries, we are both dealing with heterogeneity as well as a population that are united by a common historical past associated with life under communism and the experience of the subsequent sudden transition to capitalism (Jurcik, et al., 2013). Moreover, collectivism was not only the basis of the policy of the Soviet Union, but was also a feature of the pre-Soviet Russian empire due to the harsh conditions of existence, including the climate and the need repeatedly resist conquerors (Jurcik, et al., 2013). The specificity of serfdom in the Russian Empire also influenced the formation of collectivism. Thus, survival required mutual assistance and interdependence (Jurcik, et al., 2013).

This shared history, also means that many share traditions and values, educational experiences and a common language (Jurcik, et al., 2013). Many also identify with Russians or have a hybrid identity (for example, Russian-Ukrainian identity), indicating the prevalence of Russian values and norms during life in the Soviet Union (Jurcik, et al., 2013).

An additional complexity are the generations that have emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union. Gavrilyuk et al. (2016) distinguish between four Post-Soviet generations. The earlier Soviet generations are defined as the Soviet generation and the late-Soviet generation. The following generation includes the period immediately

following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Post-Soviet transitive generation), whilst the latest generation refers to Russian youths who grew up under the Putin regime. Consequently, Post-Soviet immigrants may display an array of attitudes towards gender relations, emotional and social norms, as well as child rearing (Jurcik et.al., 2013).

Immigration from Post-Soviet countries

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many immigrated to Canada, Germany, Israel, the USA, and other, mostly Western, countries (Jurcik et al., 2013). According to push-pull theory, there are two types of factors, which may influence people to immigrate (Boyd, 1989). Push factors refer to various characteristics of the country of residence, such as economic and social factors, that motivate the choice to leave, while pull factors refer to attractive aspects of the country of immigration (Boyd, 1989). Migration in the post-Soviet countries is considered by researchers from the point of view of both factors, but the main emphasis has fallen on push factors (Radnitz, 2006). Ethnic violence combined with economic decline have been found to be the main push factors for people from Russia and other Post-Soviet regions (Heleniak, 2001).

Considering migration figures from Soviet states: According to Mirsky (2009), Israel has taken in over a million people since the late 1980s; the USA have taken in about 450,000 people in the ten years since 1995, not to mention hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants (Lashenykh-Mumbauer, 2005). Regarding Canada, the number of immigrants from former Soviet countries was about 234,000 from 1991 to 2015 (Denisenko, 2020). Additionally, there were about 3.5 million immigrants from the former Soviet Union living in Germany in 2017 and, according to INSEE (2015), 167000 were living in France in 2015 (as cited in Denisenko, 2020). Italy had 360000 in the 2011 census (Denisenko, 2020). The flow of immigrants to New Zealand also increased after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Opara, 2017) reaching 12489 people according to 2018 Census (Stats NZ, 2020). The main ways of immigration for the last three decades for this group was work, relations with local people (marriage and partnerships), and visas applying under the family category (Opara, 2017).

Recent studies show that there are particular factors that influence the adaptation of immigrants in Post-Soviet group. In terms of gender differences, research indicate that

females suffered from a considerably higher rate of alienation from American culture compared to males (Birman & Tyler, 1994). Organisationally, the presence of a well-organised national community, minority networks and institutions in the country of immigration (defined as ethnic vitality) were important factors for better adaptation to the host country among Russian-speaking immigrants in France, Germany, and the Netherlands (Suanet-Galchenko & Van De Vijver, 2008). Remennick (2004) states that former Soviet immigrants in many host countries, including Israel, tend to retain their culture and ethnic identity, however in Israel this was more typical of the older age group.

Suanet-Galchenko and Van De Vijver (2008) posit that lower cultural distance between Russian immigrants and locals reduces the levels of depression and homesickness, as well as improves their psychological and social-cultural adaptation. Another important factor leading to acculturation difficulties among a large proportion of Russian-speaking immigrants was a low proficiency in the language of the host country (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2008). Jasinskaja-Lahti (2008) found that the proficiency in Finnish writing, reading, speaking and listening was the main contributor of psychological and socio-cultural adjustment to Finland among Russian-speaking immigrants from Post-Soviet countries (Russia and Estonia). Similar results were found among Post-Soviet immigrants in Israel (Remennick, 2004). Russian-speaking immigrants in US with lower language skills were correlated with higher depression levels (Fox et al., 2016). Additionally, language difficulties were the main issue among more than half of Russian-speaking immigrants in Israel, however those who were able to acquire new language skills attained a better economic situation and social integration (Remennick, 2004).

Despite the data available on this immigrant group, there remains a lack of the research on how to provide appropriate psychological and clinical services to Russian-speaking immigrants (Hundley & Lambie, 2007). These immigrants have been found as having high levels of distress and depressive symptoms which often accompanied by psychosomatic problems (Hundley & Lambie, 2007; Ullmann et. al., 2013). Although et al (2013) indicate that mental health issues of Post-Soviet immigrants are not well covered in the literature.

Post-Soviet population in NZ

      This section will provide statistical data on immigrants from Post-Soviet countries in NZ from 2006 to 2018 as well as review some local research involving this population. As Figure 1 indicates, the percentage of immigrants in NZ from post-Soviet countries such as Russia, and Ukraine, grew from approximately 6,000 to 11,500 from 2006 to 2018.

Figure 1

Number of immigrants (usually-residents, born overseas) in New Zealand Census (Stats NZ, 2020)
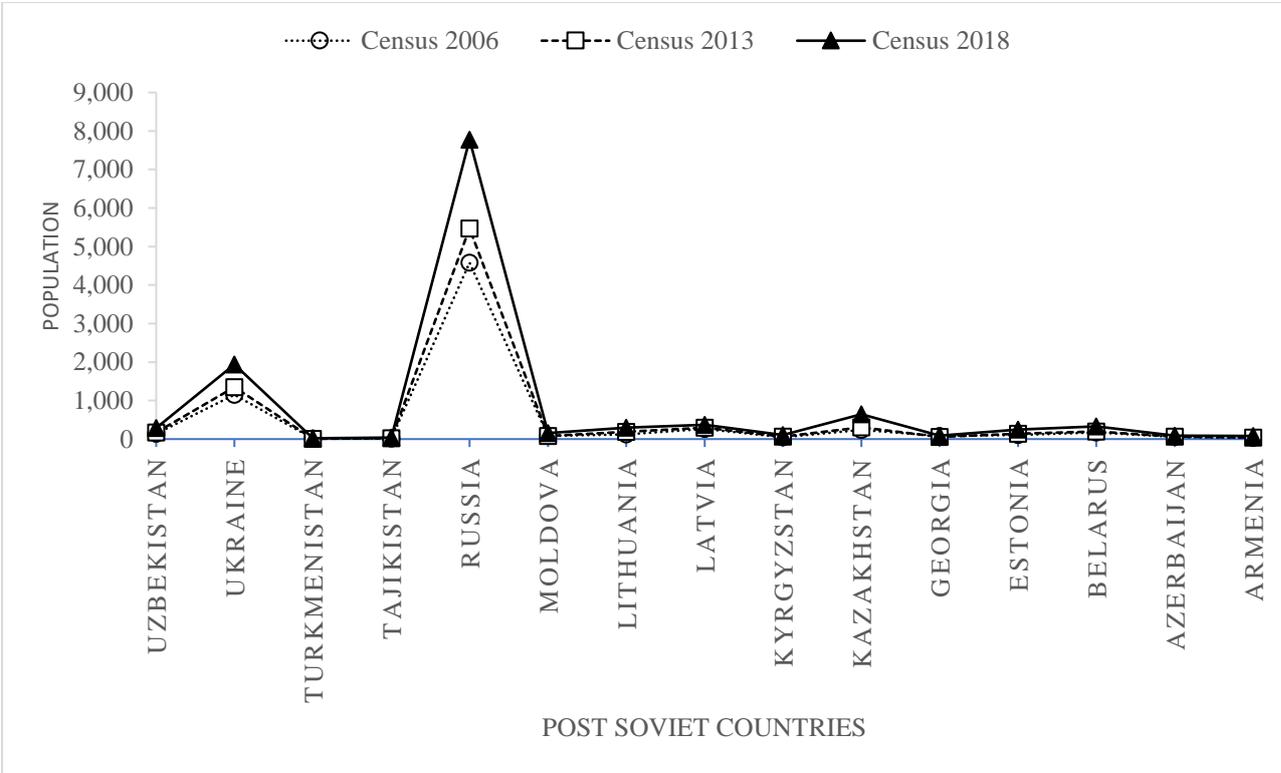
Table 1 and Figure 2 below show the growth in the population of each post-soviet ethnicity since the 2013 census. From this we can see the most prevalent ethnicity populations being migrants from Russia (the most dominant group), Ukraine and Kazakhstan:

Table 2

*Census 2006 to 2018 for Post-Soviet ethnicities (usually-residents, born overseas) in New Zealand Census data (*Stats NZ, 2020*)*

Country	Census 2006	Census 2013	Census 2018
Uzbekistan	138	174	285
Ukraine	1152	1,350	1,941
Turkmenistan	12	9	21
Tajikistan	18	24	42
Russia	4581	5,469	7,776
Moldova	78	84	156
Lithuania	120	189	300
Latvia	261	300	375
Kyrgyzstan	45	63	105
Kazakhstan	240	309	648
Georgia	81	60	93
Estonia	105	141	246
Belarus	171	201	333
Azerbaijan	54	66	90
Armenia	33	42	78
Total Post-Soviet population	7089	8481	12489
Total New Zealand population	4027947	3982614	4699755

Interestingly the number of immigrants from Georgians and Turkmenistan in New Zealand declined between the 2006 and 2013 NZ census. The number of those from Georgia decreased from 81 to 60 respectively following an increase by 33 in the 2018 census (Stats NZ, 2020). Similarly, the number of immigrants from Turkmenistan also declined in migration to New Zealand between 2006 and 2013 NZ census from 12 to 9 respectively and an increase of 21 in the 2018 census (Stats NZ, 2020). These immigrants may have moved back or moved to another country – possibly using NZ as a mid-point in immigrating to Australia. Looking at Australian census data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, n.d), the number of immigrants born in Turkmenistan rose from 45 in 2006 to 74 in 2011 followed by insignificant increase of 4 in 2016. The number of people who immigrated to Australia from Georgia also increased from 337 in 2006 to 427 in 2011 reaching a peak of 492 in 2016.

It is important to mention that the political situation in both Turkmenistan and Georgia was not stable after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which could have influenced the immigration statistics. Turkmenistan was under the authoritarian state rule of President Saparmurat Niyazov from 27 October 1990 until his death on 21 December 2006. (Dailey, 1993). The president implicitly rejected the concept of the universality of human rights (Dailey, 1993). Georgia went through a Russo-Georgian war that took place in August 2008 which could have contributed to a change in immigration (Emerson, 2008).

According to the chart below, there has been a substantial increase across one census period from 2013 to 2018 at about 40-55 of Post-Soviet immigrants from each country:

Figure 2

Percentage total of ethnicities of Post-Soviet population (usually-residents[2], born overseas) in New Zealand Census (Stats NZ, 2020)
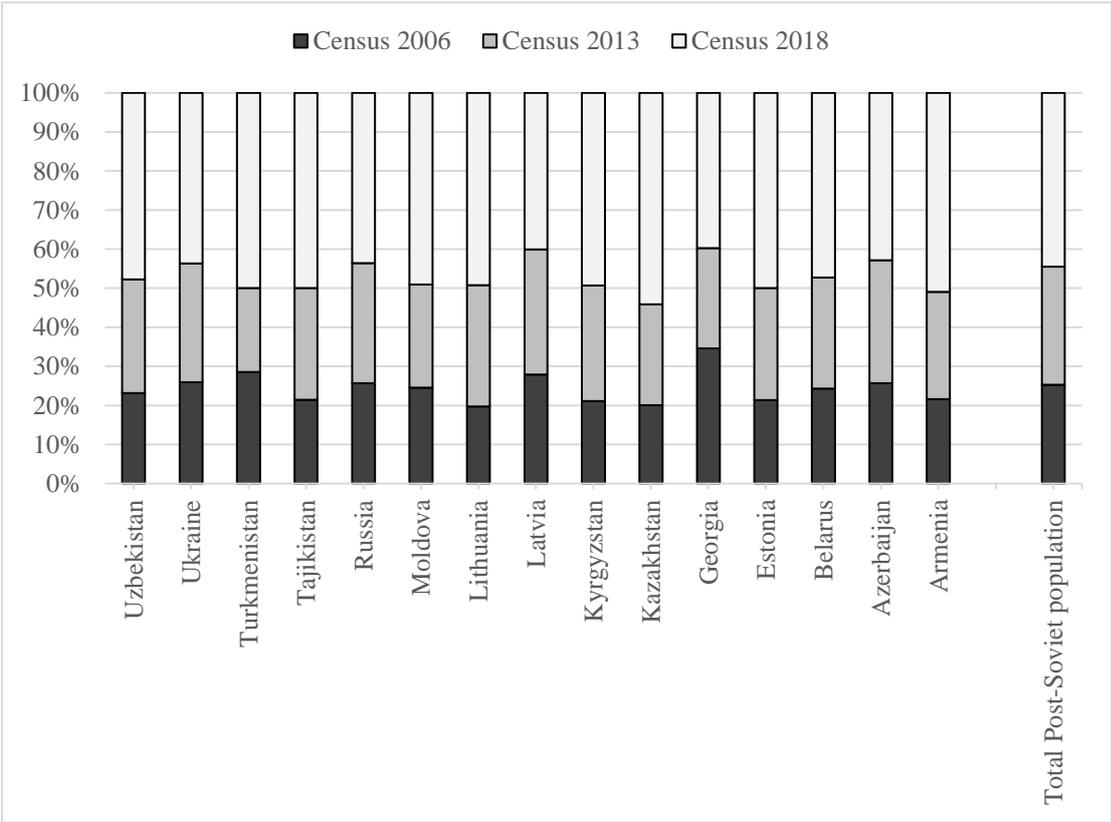
2 Usually, the resident population excludes people temporarily in the NZ, those on a visitor's visa and those residents who are outside the NZ territory at the time of the census (Stats NZ, n.d.)

20

At the moment there is a lack of research in NZ related to experiences of immigrants from post-Soviet states compared with other countries (Maydell-Stevens et al., 2007). The question that arises given the above overview is how to conduct research with this group; should we unite them under one category, or should we study them separately? Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007) support the idea of categorising Russian-speaking immigrants from Post-Soviet countries as a single group due to the shared soviet history, linguistic and cultural similarities and suggest that immigrants whose native language is Russian may have different patterns of acculturation compared to other migrant' categories. However, more research is needed to further support such a formulation. Currently, there are only a few papers available on the experiences of immigrants from post-Soviet countries in NZ.

Regarding existing studies in NZ, Maydell-Stevens, et al. (2007) found that both integration and separation strategies were prevalent among Russian-Speaking immigrants, but that more successful immigrants tended to utilise the former. All the participants reported an increased level of psychological distress during the initial stage of adaptation in NZ. The main contributors influencing the acculturation process among the participants were balancing losses and gains, motivation and cultural identity. Gains were associated with family reunification, better guarantees of personal security and protection by NZ's government, as well as a sense of greater human rights and benefits associated with better political and legal systems and democracy. Losses were related to self-fulfilment and self-belonging[3]. These included the loss of important social relations, a habitual way of life, cultural and moral values, finances, employment, status and life satisfaction. Those immigrants whose motivation was related to self-sacrifice for the sake of the remaining family members, reported more traumatic experiences of acculturation. With regard to cultural identity, the more different NZ's culture was perceived, the more difficulties arose in the adaptation process for these participants.

A further qualitative study was conducted by Maydell (2010) with 21 Russian-speaking immigrants in order to explore the construction of their identities. The study

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[3] According to Anant (1966), self-belonging includes acceptance as well as recognition by other group members (as cited in Hagerty & Patusky, 1995).

revealed nuances in identity construction among these Russian-speaking immigrants. The loss of identity was vivid, and many coped with this loss and restored their identity through identifying themselves either with a group of other immigrants or within a community of New Zealanders. For some immigrants, the loss of identity was accompanied by pessimism and an absence of replacement for the loss of status, knowledge, qualifications, and personal experience. Others tried to resist the positioning of the local community as strangers through an orientation towards a more active strategy to regain a stronger position in their new environment. In contrast to the participants with single or hybrid identities described above, some people demonstrated a cosmopolitan identity. These people did not consider themselves compatriots or New Zealanders, but claimed a new identity as a world explorer, harmoniously including a mixture of different cultures within a holistic identity.

To conclude, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, there is still more than seven decades of shared Soviet history, language and culture between Post-Soviet countries and, as Morley and Robins (2002) propose, we might need to move towards thinking in terms of symbolic borders of shared language and culture rather than geographic ones. The existence of the USSR for about 70 years, entailed profound cultural transformations and changes in the identity of many of its inhabiting nations. The policy of the ruling party was aimed at creating a new international ethnos, the Soviet ethnos, while great attention was paid to the preservation and development of the cultural heritage of each nation. However, not all cultural elements were subject to preservation, the churches stopped working as usual because of the party's negative attitude towards religion and its replacement with the praise of science. Not all people accepted the Soviet Union and its attempt to form a single nation; ethnic and national conflicts were widespread. Despite this, many have adapted and adopted the new cultural traditions of Russian-Soviet culture and formed a new identity.

A particular attitude in the Soviet Union was towards mental health and people with mental health problems who were subject to stigma. There is information about the existence of discrimination against this category of citizens, which is still a common practice in some post-Soviet countries. After the collapse of the USSR, a large stream of migrants headed to Western countries, where they often had to learn a new language and adapt to completely new living conditions. Given the fact that collectivism was the main characteristic of life in the Soviet Union, the successful adaptation of

immigrants also depended on the presence of social ties, national communities and institutions in the country of immigration. Immigration was easier when the cultural distance between local and immigrants was lower and the level of language proficiency in the new country was higher.

Given the above, it is possible that immigrants from Post-Soviet countries share some significant similarities and differences in the way they experience immigration and acculturation but further investigation is required (Likhacheva et. al, 2015; Maydell-Stevens, 2007). For example, most of participants in the current study were born in the last 10 years before the collapse, and we can thus assume that they will have a similar mentality. Mentality is defined as a system of meanings, values and meanings of a generation within a general community, which is associated with the influence of society and its religious, social and ethnic components (Pishik, 2010).

The number of immigrants from most of the Post-Soviet countries has increased. Accordingly, there is a demand for research on this group of immigrants, given the limited amount of research available. Given the above, the intention of the current research is to explore the experiences of Post-Soviet immigrants in New Zealand considering their shared cultural background and to identify appropriate practices and interventions to be considered in assisting New Zealand's immigrants from former Soviet countries, especially in terms of supporting their psychological wellbeing.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter is devoted to discussing the theoretical and methodological foundation of this study. The first part of this chapter provides details the research process, participants and methods of analysis. Following this, issues related to ethical principles, the insider/outsider dilemma, limitations and reflexivity are highlighted.

Theory

The theory of social practice was originally developed by Pierre Bourdieu and has influenced many other authors such as Foucault, Taylor and Giddens (Reckwitz, 2002). The theory of social practice as developed by Bourdieu designates types of behaviour consisting of various and interconnected parts, this includes various types of bodily movements, mental activities, emotional components and motivations, objects, knowledges and ways of using them (Reckwitz, 2002). Social practice theory implies the ways in which people deal with the problem of human existence in society through their practices (Friedmann, 1978). Social practice theory assumes the interweaving of experience in individuals and groups with symbolic elements of culture (Ginev, 2018), the individual therefore carries and demonstrates a mixture of different practices that are also shared with and understandable to observers from the same cultural background (Reckwitz, 2002).

Existing theories of practice seek to understand actions from a contextual point of view considering cultural practices embedded in people's everyday life experiences (Meier et al., 2018). In this research I consider the acculturation process among Post-Soviet immigrants in NZ through considering the social practices that make up the new daily reality of immigrants as described by them in individual interviews. This is related to the cultural, political, historical and symbolic context uniting the immigrants, and which was described in the previous chapter. Bourdieu's theory of social practice caters for a different perspective of migration considering practices as systemic processes associated with power relations within the new social environment of the immigrant (Nowicka, 2015). Nowicka (2015) indicates that "Bourdieu's theory allows us to see the dispositions, attitudes, worldviews and practices that people display as processes rather than individual qualities" (p. 9).

Symbolic Interactionism with its emphasis on meaning provides a more focussed framework within this larger Social Practice framework. From this point of view a person is an active subject that interacts with the world and actively acts and reacts to what is happening based on their perspectives, which are dynamic and changing. As a result, the actions are not possible to be completely predicted (O'Donoghue, 2018).

According to Blumer (1969), Symbolic Interactionism understands the values attached to things as determinative in relation to the actions performed. Social interaction, the interpretation of what is happening and self-reflection change the given values. Joint actions and the processes of their formation constitute the social life of society. Meanings that people give to things are born in the process of interpretation, which also manifests itself in culture. Culture also affects the formation of identity.

Methodology

Given the theoretical background, the methodological paradigm is located in an interpretivist paradigm, which considers the behaviour of people closely related to the influence of the environment and their personal perception of it (Willis et al., 2007). The main focus of this approach is the study of subjective understanding and meanings influencing social reality, practices and people's life worlds (Gaete Celis, 2019; Kaplan & Duchon, 1988). Interpretivism implies the interdependence and inseparability of the individual and society, and the impossibility of understanding them separately from each other (O'Donoghue, 2018).

Method

The criteria for selecting participants were having a NZ work visa, residency or being motivated to get residency, as well as having lived in NZ for at least three years. All the participants were born in post-Soviet countries and spend a significant part of their life in their countries of origin. The rationale for this was that those immigrants who have been living and working in NZ for three or more years would be more able to provide extensive accounts of their experiences and the changes they have experienced over this time. Convenience sampling was used for participant selection. This sampling is when participants are selected depending on the easy accessibility at the moment or the immediate geographic proximity (Etikan et al., 2016).

An advertisement seeking participants was placed on a Facebook group for Russia-Speaking immigrants in NZ. Group members were asked to contact me if they were interested. There was great enthusiasm for the project. Approximately 60 people contacted me through messenger on Facebook within two days, this continuing even after I indicated that I no longer needed participants. Most interested people were from Russia. I selected participants on a first contact basis and sent them general information about the research. Those who were happy to continue received further documents including Participant Consent Form (Appendix C) and Transcript release authority (Appendix B). As soon as I reached 15 participants, I messaged other potential candidates that I had enough people at this stage, thanking them for their interest and indicating that I may contacted them should more participants be required.

Interviews

A qualitative interview seeks factual linguistic knowledge expressed in everyday language without trying to quantify these accounts (Kvale, 2007). The most common types of qualitative interviews mentioned in literature are structured, unstructured and semi-structured, however in reality interviews can have different forms within that continuum with semi-structured interviews in the middle (Brinkmann, 2015). The semi-structured interview was chosen as the data gathering method for this research due to the number of benefits. Firstly, semi-structured interviews include prepared topics and questions similar to structured interviews, but it allows the researcher to change the order of the questions depending on the situation, giving participants more space to share their stories while promoting significant reciprocity between the interviewer and the interviewee. Secondly, it allows the researcher more freedom than structured interviews, which can be used to clarify some of the answers of the participants and explore the topic more in depth (Galletta, 2013).

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018), to create valid questions for an interview, the researcher needs to familiarize themselves with the research topic. This has been addressed in the current research by initially reviewing the relevant literature. Then, ten questions along with the demographic form were created and checked through conducting one pilot interview with the researcher's relative. The questions explored were related (but not limited) to participants' life experiences related to immigration, local culture and locals, changes including physical and emotional wellbeing, discrimination and factors facilitating better adaptation. The questions were drawn up

on the basis of the literature review related to acculturation and the existing literature on Post-Soviet immigrants with the aim to explore all the experiences which may influence immigrants' psychological wellbeing. The Demographic form was used to collect the data regarding age, gender, country of birth, ethnicity, education, work experience, visa status, and the numbers of years resident in NZ.

After the interviews, audio recordings of the interviews with the 14 participants were transcribed, analysed in Russian, with extracts then being translated into English. The extracts used in the analyses from the participants' interviews have been preserved as close as possible to the original word order conducted in the interviews. No original names were used, with any information leading to the disclosure of a participants' identities removed. To foster the rich accounts emerging from the interviews, the technique of active listening was used.

According to Louw et al. (2011), it is helpful to use active listening techniques to encourage open-ended responses in semi-structured interviews. Basic recommendations for active listening include being attentive, open-minded, empathetic and non-judgemental. Paraphrasing and reflection on both information and emotions were also utilised; using clarifying, open-ended questions and summarising statements where necessary.

The number of participants were chosen based on guidelines from the Information Power model (Malterud et.al., 2016). These guidelines highlight the data collection process as dynamic with the required number of participants based on the specific characteristics of the sample and the quality of the information provided from each participant. Thus, the richer the information that is collected from each participant, the smaller the sample needed.

The final number of participants was determined during the interview process and the ongoing analysis of whether the desired 'power' had been achieved. The total number of participants was 15, with 11 women and four men. I believe that the chosen number of participants can be justified because the aim of the study is broad as well as the specificity of the participants (Malterud, et.al.,2016). One participant was interviewed but then was withdrawn due to the necessary transcript release authority form not being signed, with the participant not responding to subsequent attempts to make contact.

However, given the richness of data collected, it was decided that there was no need for an extra participant.

Given the timing of the study during the NZ CoVID-19 Level 4 lockdown from the 30th March 2020 to the 27th of April 2020, the interviews were conducted online through Facebook, WhatsApp application and phone calls. Some participants were happy with video chat, some on them preferred audio. Sometimes the quality of video conversation was not ideal, so we changed to audio. Only audio recordings were made of the conversations after appropriate permission was obtained from the participants. The average interview length was about 60 minutes; with three interviews being approximately 30 minutes in duration.

As shown in the Figure 3 and Figure 4 below, the age of participants ranged from 30 to 59 years old and they have spent between three to 26 years in NZ. The mean participants' age was 38.7 and mean years in NZ was 6.9 years, with standard deviations of 7.7 and 6 respectively:

Figure 3

Age of participants
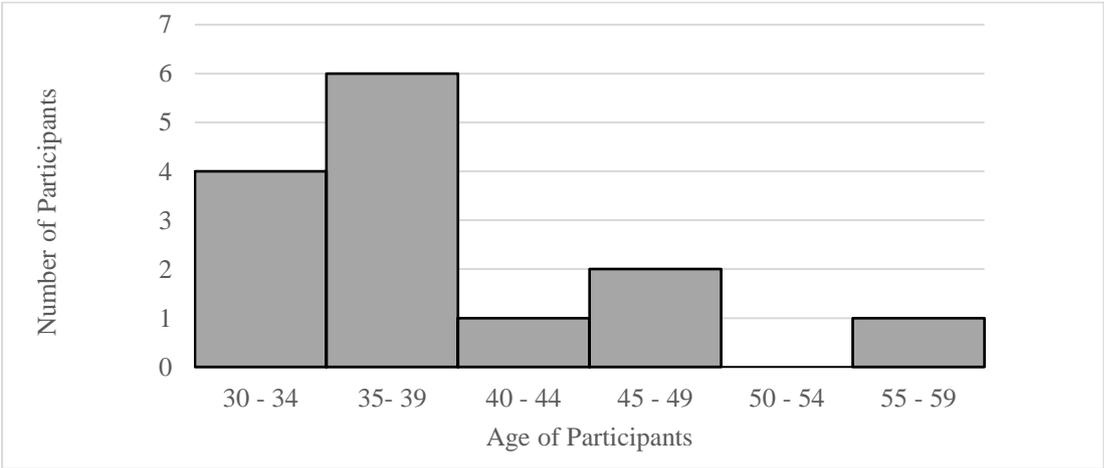
Figure 4

Years in NZ
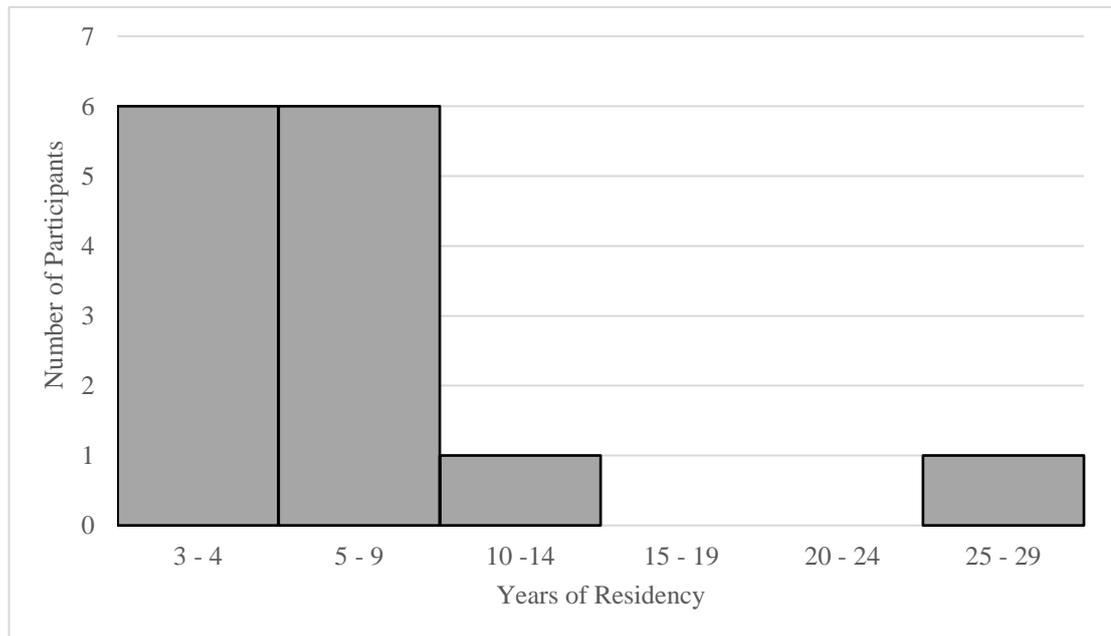
Thus, most of the participants were children at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a few were teenagers and one a young adult. Thus, the lived experience of the majority is of the transitional and Putin periods. For one participant living in NZ for 25-29 years the experience of acculturation would be quite unique reflecting a different NZ for someone emerging from an early-transition post-USSR country.

Before the interview, all participants were acquainted with general information related to the research and their rights, they were then asked to sign a "Participant Consent" form which was sent to them beforehand through Facebook. The email of the project was provided to participants so they could send the signed forms there. "The authority for the release of transcripts" form was sent to the participants later when their transcriptions from their interviews were ready for them to check. After the interviews, the participants were provided with Information brochure "Psychological/Mental Health Services in NZ" which are free and available 24/7 (Appendix D). The brochure is based on information provided by Mental Health Foundation (2019) and Ministry of Health (2020) online.

Participants were also given a $30 gift voucher each for a local supermarket to acknowledge their participation and time. One participant declined the voucher offer. The vouchers were sent through NZ Post to observe safety standards during the Level

4 CoVID-19 lockdown pandemic after the completion of the interviews. All information which contained addresses of participants was destroyed once the posting of the vouchers was complete.

As shown on Table 3, eight of the participants hold resident or permanent resident visas, three of them were on work visas and three people had citizenship. Participants all come from Post-Soviet states (Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine); however, the majority were from Russia. One participant had left the USSR before its collapse, immigrated to the USA and then came to NZ to live here permanently. Another one is currently living in Australia but holds NZ residency and considers coming back to NZ in the future. Regarding ethnicity, eight of the participants identified as Russians, two as Tatars, one as Polish and the remaining two as Ukrainian.

In terms of education, two of the participants had level 6 or lower Tertiary certificates, twelve people hold at least one university degree, with seven of these holding two degrees (Table 6). Most of the participants have had diverse work experience both in NZ and in Russia. Five people received a second level seven and higher degree in NZ and four of them have changed their field of specialisation.

Table 3

Participant details

Visa/Status	Partnerships' visa	1
	Resident visa	4
	Permanent resident	4
	Work visa	1
	Citizenships	3
	Essential work visa	1
Gender	Male	4
	Female	10
Age	Mean	38.71
	Standard Deviation	7.74
	Range	30 - 59
Years in NZ	Mean	6.96
	Standard Deviation	6.05
	Range	3 - 26

Table 4

Participants' Home Countries

Country	Number
Russia	8
Kazakhastan	3
Ukraine	2
Belarus	1

Table 5

Participants' Ethnicities

Ethnicity	Number
Russian	8
Ukraine	3
Tatar	2
Polish	1

Table 6

Participants' Tertiary Education

Education	Number
Two University degrees	7
One University degree	5
Gained additional level seven and higher degree in NZ	5
Changed their field of specialisation completely	4
Level 6 or lower Tertiary certificates	2

Data Analysis

This research implies an inductive approach, which means that results of data analysis were received through the emergence of major themes from raw data without preliminary hypothesis (Thomas, 2003). Thematic analysis has been chosen as the most suitable method for qualitative data analysis in current research compared with other existing analytic methods seeking themes and patterns in the data. These methods include grounded theory, discourse analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis and thematic decomposition analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Among all of them, thematic analysis is considered as a fundamental method recommended to be learned first for novice qualitative researchers, as it provides greater flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and can be used for the analysis of factual information and ideas as well as the meanings emerging from these (Guest et al., 2012). Initial ideas found in raw data become codes, which are then grouped together to form themes (Guest, et. al., 2012).

In this research project, I followed the six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first phase of immersion in the data included the transcription accompanied by taking notes of thoughts and code ideas while re-reading the interviews, followed by creating the codes (manually) with some pieces coded more than once. The third stage of data analysis was associated with grouping and regrouping of codes into themes with the use of mind maps and tables. Some codes did not fit any themes, therefore they were separated and revised later. The next stage of evaluating and revising the themes took the most time, some themes were divided into two, and some, on the contrary, were merged within existing ones. The fifth stage was about refining the themes by going back to extracts related to each topic, drawing up a detailed report whilst also checking compliance with research questions. Finally, thematic analysis ended when all themes had been analysed, interpreted and included in the final report presenting a coherent story all with included interview extracts.

Reflexivity and positioning

There are many views on reflexivity and the level of self-disclosure by a researcher in qualitative research as well as its impact on results, and there is no doubt that this is an extremely important and influential part of qualitative research (Adkins, 2002). There are two basic positions for a researcher in qualitative research which needs to be considered: the insider and the outsider positions (Hellawell, 2006). Merton (1972) describes the insider as a researcher who has a deep knowledge of the community and the people involved. An outsider, however, means the opposite, where the researcher is not familiar with and is not part of the studied community and its member (Hellawell, 2006).

A researcher's understanding on what position they occupy within a given continuum is a significant contribution in scientific research (Hellawell, 2006). I moved from Russia five years ago at the age of 23 to study in NZ and join my sister who has been living here for around 15 years and has a family with a New Zealander. I can now say that more than a half of my extended family are New Zealanders, this consequently providing me with both an insider and outsider perspective. Indeed, there is a need to consider the insider/outsider dilemma from a new perspective which is less dichotomic (Milligan, 2016). Dualistic understandings of positionings cannot correspond to reality, as positionings refers to a dynamic process. Thus, it is impossible to constantly maintain one position; the position changes depending on the situation. I would call

myself what Milligan (2016) describes as an "inbetweener". Considering the fact that Post-Soviet immigrants share the same language, I would call myself as an insider from a linguistic point of view. There were many topics during interviews that I was able to respond to and understand as an insider, but this could change with the next topic raised by the participant. This process took place from moment to moment with the same person in the same conversation (Mullings, 1999).

Another important thing for a researcher is to be aware of is their stance regarding self-disclosure with participants. I support the views of those who see some self-disclosure as a way of establishing a trusting atmosphere and contact, which is difficult to ensure in interviews that are structured in a more authoritarian tradition of uneven roles (Abell et al., 2006), which may make it difficult to access the necessary information especially from Russian participants (Voldnes et al., 2014). Indeed, the principle of hierarchy and high-power distance inherent in Russian culture can also create difficulties in conducting research (Voldnes et al., 2014).

This is why my position as a researcher was in favour of self-disclosure, which helped me to build trust with the participants. However, I tried to ensure that the conversation remained about the participant and their experience and opinion. It is impossible to avoid the influence of a researcher in the results that are obtained, since both the interview process and the analysis of the data are highly variable and depend on the direct choice and preferences of a researcher (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). Thus, it is important for the researcher to indicate their position and influence that they could have on the research (Ratner, 2002). Considering this, I wrote reflective notes both immediately after the interview and during the analysis of the data. A summary related to the topics relevant to my experience is presented below.

The topics related to the feeling of alienation and the difficulties of finding local friends due to linguistic and cultural differences spoke to me the most. I cannot say that I experienced a lot of stress from looking for a job, but more because of the loss of my work and social status. Emotionally I was very touched by the stories of those who had to go through a lot of trials and hard work including being employed doing manual labour, which I have experienced myself. Also, very relevant to my experience was the topic voiced by some participants related to the acceptance of the fact that you may feel different among locals even after living in NZ for more than a decade, partly

due to language differences, a noticeable accent, and differences associated with education, humour and mindset.

After placing the announcement, I immediately found a sufficient number of participants, but I continued to receive messages about those wishing to participate in the research for a while. Such a large flow of people wishing to share their personal stories made me feel that there is a huge need to be heard in the community. Of course, we must not forget about the possible impact of the CoVID-19 pandemic on the emotional and psychological state of immigrants, which could serve as a reason for the large number of applicants wanting to take part in the interviews

Many participants expressed their gratitude after the interview, noting that it was interesting to share their experiences and reflect on these. Three interviews were significantly shorter than the others, although it was felt that all the topics had been explored. Two of these participants spent more than ten years in NZ and both noted that it is difficult to talk about some of the practices and changes because a lot of time has passed since they immigrated and it is difficult to distinguish between the influence of acculturation and growing up in NZ. Many questions and topics raised in the questionnaire did not cause much response, there was a feeling that these topics were no longer relevant, which was expressed by one of the participants.

Ethical considerations

This project has been reviewed and evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, a full ethical review was regarded as not necessary. Ethical issues identified in Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (2017) were however carefully considered and are presented below:

Autonomy

There was no pressure on participants to respond. They were fully informed about the research process and the way the data would be used and shared. The information sheet was supplied and included all necessary information (including contacts of the researcher and supervisor). Thus, respondents were able to make decisions based on full disclosure.

Risk of Harm

Some participants can be more sensitive to certain questions about their life experiences. To avoid harm, the respondents were informed prior to the interviews that they had the right to not answer any questions if they did not feel safe and that they could disengage from participation in the research at any stage. The confidentiality of participants was protected as no original names were revealed. The interviews were conducted in a safe and supportive environment with the use of open-ended questions. The experience and education of the researcher (including two years of employment as a psychologist on The Russian National Hotline) helped to build trust, rapport with participants and to gain closure. The recordings and personal information of the participant were stored safely by the researcher and removed after the completion of the thesis. The Authority for the Release of Transcripts form were signed by the participants which means that they have approved the publication of the anonymised transcripts.

Special relationships

The autonomy, welfare, rights, values, and beliefs of participants were considered and respected. The manner of collection of personal information was not against the law or intrusive and unfair. The researcher was aware of her responsibilities towards the respondents, the supervisor, Massey University and other researchers in the community and acted in a professional and caring way (Appendix E).

Limitations

There are certain limitations applied to qualitative research and thematic analysis which need to be mentioned. To begin with, the researcher is a research tool themselves which inevitably influences the type of data, analysis process and themes obtained, even if the researcher has a high level of reflexivity (Roulston, 2001; Ochieng, 2009). Moreover, there is a risk and likelihood that the ambiguities inherent in human language and contact may affect the research outcomes (Ochieng, 2009).

Last, most of the participants are very well educated, to a tertiary level, which may put some limitations on the research since they may not applicable to the full range of immigrants from post-Soviet countries.

Trustworthiness of the findings

Trustworthiness refers to research rigour, which differs for qualitative and quantitative studies (Anney, 2014; Guba, 1981). The main issue of qualitative researchers is that the trustworthiness cannot be estimated by concepts of validity and reliability used in quantitative inquiry, where the findings can be applied to bigger groups (Shenton, 2004). Qualitative researchers have other parameters in order to estimate trustworthiness of the research. According to Shenton (2004) and Guba (1981), there are four main criteria applicable to qualitative/interpretative research, being credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility is related to the validity of the results and their relevance to the research objectives and reality (Shenton, 2004). In order to ensure credibility, Shenton compiled a list of actions a researcher should strive to enact. First, previous studies related to the topic of acculturation and immigrants from Post-Soviet countries internationally and in NZ were examined. Next, the data obtained in the interviews was read and checked by the participants for reliability. As a part of this, the researcher compiled reflective notes after the interviews, which are separately highlighted and summarised in this document. Iterative questioning was used in the interviews to check the accuracy of the information received. Shenton notes that an important contribution to the credibility of research are frequent conversations with supervisors and peers, and I followed these actions by participating in a 'Qualitative Research Group' organised by the institute, where there were opportunities to receive feedback from peers and other supervisors.

The possibility of applying the results to other situations and a wider group of participants is defined as transferability (Shenton, 2004). A detailed description of the research process was used in this paper to provide the reader with an opportunity to assess the project's transferability (Bitsch, 2005).

Dependability is concerned with the likelihood of getting the same results when repeating the study. In order for future researchers to be able to repeat all the steps taken by me, I tried to describe in as much detail as possible each step and all decisions that were made during the research process and in advance (Shenton, 2004).

The confirmability of a study is a measure of how realistic the study results are (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability is related to the extent to which the researcher's

individual beliefs could have influenced the results (Shenton, 2004). To support this I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research process and in writing this report I have attempted to be as transparent as possible regarding every step taken and decision made.

Chapter 3: Results and Discussion

Using thematic analysis, seven main themes were identified. Five of these themes include two to four subthemes (see Table 7). The themes were prioritised and listed according to those discussed most by participants, to those experiences described by the fewest. The researcher's clarifying comments are in square brackets in the extracts, omitted participants' comments are indicated by empty square brackets, and pauses are indicated by three full stops. The names of the participants are replaced with numbers, the female and male participants are designated as 'F' and 'M' respectively. Curly brackets with number and gender references were used to indicate participants.

Table 7

Themes and subthemes

Theme	Subtheme 1	Subtheme 2	Subtheme 3	Subtheme 4
Cultural differences	Friendship and relationship attitudes	Social pressure	Small talk	Ambitions and further development
Employment	Work and status	Emotional outcomes		
Alienation and other emotional outcomes				
Changes	Appearance standards	Physical well-being	Housing and comfort of living	Gender roles
Home and relationships left behind	Remoteness of NZ	Technologies	Family and relationships issues	
Russian-speaking community in NZ	Negativity towards compatriots	Facebook group	Ethnic conflicts	
Discrimination				

Cultural differences

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ward et al. (2001) claimed that the greater the cultural differences between immigrants and locals, the more difficulties the former may have to face in settling down in the new country. These difficulties may be psychological and sociocultural (Ward & Searle, 1991) and may negatively impact on immigrants' identities (Ward et al., 2011).

As described by participants during their interviews, the main cultural differences that they described as strongly influence their acculturation process (both negatively and positively) were related to friendship and relationship attitudes, social pressure, small talk, ambitions and further development.

Friendship and relationship attitudes

Linguistic research shows that Russians-speakers have a particular understanding of friendships and relationships with close people (Gladkova, 2013). These features include being extremely open about one's thoughts and feelings when interacting with people who one is close to and providing constant care and help to their inner social circle. Historically, social ties with friends and relatives were a significant resource in helping people live in conditions of corruption and ineffective service provision in the Soviet Union (Ledeneva & Ledeneva, 1998).

According to a number of studies, similar attitudes remain common in the Post-Soviet space at the present time (Chentsova Dutton, 2012). In the same way, three participants {1F,4M,10F} identified cultural differences such as a more direct way of sharing thoughts:

> *… In Russia they talk to you directly, they say to your face that if someone, for example, does not like you, or something is wrong at work. They will come to you and tell you and explain the situation, here this is not acceptable… {10F}*

As was suggested by some authors, Russian attitudes toward friendships include greater efforts in spending time together, emotional intensity, expectations and engagement more so than European and American standards (Chentsova Dutton, 2012). Similarly, 11 participants in this research shared their need and preference for a different level of friendship than locals could provide, however five people still had made some friends among local people {12F, 5F, 14F, 9M}.

The most important characteristics described that facilitated friendships were shared language, history, interests and topics, and being open and honest. Nine participants mentioned cultural differences with locals, including different attitudes towards friendships, as a main reason of choosing the same-culture friends {3F, 4M, 5F, 8F, 10F, 11F, 13F, 5F, 11F}, the majority of them indicated that Russian-speaking friends were better able to fulfil their needs in friendships and emotional support despite the fact that all the participants noticed that local people in NZ are very friendly:

> *... Our social circle is Russian-speaking, it turns out like that for some reason. We only find local English-speaking acquaintances at work, but that is that they are more like colleagues and not really friends. Our friends are more Russian-speaking, because we have more interests with them, we have more background, and more topics to talk about ... {3F}*

> *... They are just different, that's all. [They have] different attitudes to life, different food, different traditions, customs. Well, I noticed that New Zealanders are more closed. I thought that maybe I'm an idiot or a fool, that I don't know the language... [But is not the reason] They can sort of talk there like about birds [about something superficial], but not about something else like we used to in the Soviet Union and in Russia where you could bought a bottle of wine or some other drinks, came to a friend and had an intimate conversation - there is no such thing here. That is, they are not allowed, they are closed... [ ] Even those people [Russian-speaking immigrants] who have lived 15 and 20 years, they do not have New Zealanders and Kiwi friends. Maybe if the wife is Russian, the husband is New Zealander - then yes. Otherwise, I have not met [anything like that] ... On the one hand, this is no offense, this is probably the specificity of locals ... {4M}*

Unlike with locals, the participants {4M, 8F, 9F} seemed to find it easier to build and maintain relationships with other immigrants, as they were regarded as also being in transition, and being more open and understanding. New Zealanders were seen as socially settled and as not open to change and difference. Thus, other immigrants were seen as having more in common with the participants:

... And sometimes kiwis already have friends. They no longer need other friends, they went to kindergarten, church, institute and universities. Everyone knows each other and the social circle is complete. Therefore, yes you get in there, you have some kind of contacts but not so that you strongly become part of theirs ... But if you are the foreigner who immigrated here then you can easily make friends with anyone, with Brazilians, with anyone - with other immigrants, because they are also willing to communicate ... {9M}

... The problem is that we only immigrated here but they live here and already have established social ties. In order to somehow get to them, well, you need to be able to do it somehow. They will communicate with you, but this does not mean that you will become super-duper friends with them... {8F}

Similarly, Festinger's cognitive dissonance avoidance theory (1957) confirms the likelihood that immigrants will positively assess others who have made a similar choice to change their country of residence (as cited in Just & Anderson, 2015). Also, understanding what other immigrants are going through can influence a more empathetic attitude (Just & Anderson, 2015). Just and Anderson (2015) proposed that such an attitude towards migrants is one possible option, an opposite tendency observed in immigrants is based on competition with immigrants and resulting negative attitude towards immigration. Interestingly, the same authors mention that negativity towards immigration among immigrants is more common after they get citizenship in their new country of settlement.

Two participants were harsher in their evaluation, describing locals as being two-faced, hypocritical and not trustworthy, which hindered building better relationships at work and in daily life. One of them mentioned that it is normal for locals to complain about you behind your back, which is not acceptable in his culture {4M,10F}:

...What I don't like at work - this is such a culture that they like to complain ... then if it is normal for them, it is not normal for us ... If you did not manage to do something, then they have already complained about you. I was warned about these things at work and I tried not to talk about something like...let's say like politics. So, there were purely conversations about birds [talking about something unimportant], because you can communicate with them, and they can turn it all over if you say something about the bosses or something

else, then it can play against you... I also noticed that there were no conflicts, but such clashes [at work], they [co-workers] believe that whoever is the first to report and bring information to the leadership, whose is right. [and once] there was the supervisor who said [to me], we all go to the manager to sort it [issues] out. [I said]: "Well, let's go." I have not yet come in, but he started talking that I flipped him off, although I did not. I said, wait, dear, I didn't flip you off ... The manager is really young, he was just taught how to extinguish the conflict. They haven't taught him how to solve it yet, but again, it depends on the leader. Thus, there are things in the declaration, that we are all so kind, fluffy, but in fact it is not always like that… {4M}

In the previous comment, the phrase "*whoever is the first to report and bring information to the leadership, whose is right*" was said sarcastically, like if the conversation was about little children. This suggests that male co-workers who complain, as acting like someone who was vulnerable. Similarly, Günthner (1997) indicates that the perception of complaints is precepted as a weakness and a feminine trait in the Western community, which is inappropriate to demonstrate as a man (as cited in Muravyeva, 2014). Muravyeva (2014) also proposed that "complaining might put a person in a vulnerable and disadvantaged position in relation to those in positions of power" (p.99).

Unlike most participants, two participants distanced themselves from the cultural practices of their home countries. They have found that cultural practices of locals accommodated their need for privacy {8F,14F}. These participants demonstrated the importance of individualistic values common to Pakeha New Zealand culture (Haar et al., 2014), which could be the result of the acculturation process and cultural transformation. However, both participants still admitted the importance of friendships with other Russian-speaking immigrants in NZ:

… Russians [in NZ] are shameless to some degree, despite the fact that they have left Russia [they have not changed much since they have left]. They ask questions - "Why haven't you married yet? Is there any guy [in your life]? "… But what difference does it make to you? [said the participant outraged] ... Therefore, I do not share my personal life much, I do not allow anyone to go there and this is why other nationalities are somewhat closer to me…{8F}

... They don't crawl into my soul; I don't expect some sort of close [communication]. [ ] I am a person who does not like to communicate a lot on personal topics. But in this everyday life it is very comfortable at the level of communication... {14F}

The majority of the interviews with the participants align with the assumptions that friendships in Russian culture imply a strong emotional connection, strong expectations regarding involvement in these friendships, and engagement and efforts to build relationships (Chentsova Dutton, 2012). Only two participants showed signs of cultural transformation, where they showed a preference for perceived New Zealand ways of communication and the need for privacy.

Social pressure

Four participants noted that they found NZ as having fewer social pressures when compared to their home countries {2M, 5F, 8F, 11F}. Two female participants mentioned gendered pressure towards woman is common in their home countries. Similarly, Oushakine (2000) supports that patriarchalism is a common characteristic of both Russian culture and the then Soviet Union:

...It seems to me that everything is happening very early [in people's lives] in Russia. They face this pressure that they have to have children early, around 20-25 years old. This is accepted there as the old age to give a birth after the age of 30. I know for sure what it is different here [in NZ] and in Europe, where people after they're 30 only begin to think about it… {11F}

...In Russia - you must, must, must, must [meet social expectations]. For me personally, this has always been the case. "And what else did you expect? - you are a woman, you are a wife, mother, mistress" and so on... {8F}

Kerig et al (1993) indicate that in Russian culture official gender equality often coexisted with the presence of more patriarchal stereotypes in relation to gender roles. In the courtship process, where women are more submissive, the man plays an active role. After marriage, a woman is expected to take over the household, even though most women work just like men. After a certain time, such an unfair distribution of responsibilities can cause conflict and discontent for woman. Similar expectations of a woman also remain after the birth of a child. However, most quarrels begin after a

woman goes to work as her other responsibilities will still be there while the main responsibility of the man remains his work.

It is important to mention the motherhood was understood in Soviet Union as a female destiny, which still continues to exist, especially in post-Soviet Russia, despite the huge transformations in the perception of being a mother as a personal choice and responsibility (Issoupova, 2012). Moreover, they said that the new understanding of the family has not yet been fully formed in the Russian society, where ideally a man occupies a significant place in raising children. This is one of the reasons for the disappointment of many Russian women in their companions, which leads to gender tension in modern days (Issoupova, 2012). Thus, child-rearing practices adopted in the Soviet Union can be a cause of stress for those who have immigrated with children and have to deal with different approaches to upbringing in a new society (Slonim-Nevo, 1999).

On a slightly different note, one female participant mentioned experiencing social pressure in the church, including strict rules and expectations towards clothing, as well as pressure to look more successful and richer *{8F}*:

> *...The cultural differences of the church are like earth and sky [very different, almost opposite]. In Russia it: "Why are you in pants, and why didn't you put a scarf on your head?" [lots of pressure and criticism towards your clothing] ... Once I came [to the church] here how I was [how I usually dress], no one said a word to me. On the contrary, everyone told me: "Let's go have a tea after the church service"'... [They are] nice, simple people. [They said:] "Oh, hello, we have never seen you here" ... It was such a homely atmosphere there. It was interesting, I will not say that I am fond of religion, but I was just interested to compare. In Russia I went to church about one and a half times in my entire life [very rare]. It was too much [pressure in Russia] ... it was always some kind of pressure I experienced. [Including] how they look at you, how these grandmothers [old ladies] evaluate you ...[They look at you,] if you are in a skirt or not in a skirt, if the skirts' is shorter, [wondering] why did I put this on my lips, why does my hair stick out ... {8F}*

Such austerity of the church described above may be associated with the reluctance of the Orthodox Church to change with modern times, 'for Orthodoxy, time stands still' (as cited in Ramet, 2006, p.148). The Orthodox Church has shown remarkable longevity and consistency in practice across numerous historical epochs, having survived about 400 years under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, followed by about 500 years under the rule of monarchs, and then 80 years under communist rule where its possibilities were severely limited (Ramet, 2006).

One participant mentioned the pressure to look good and own an expensive car {2M}:

> *...In Kazakhstan, cars like Toyota or Land Cruiser are very popular... And people which may nor even have a job or having low-income job can take a crazy credit, with an incredibly high interest, to buy this car for themselves ... [The car] which, roughly speaking, they don't need, so that others might think better about them... well, in their understanding, it's good. Many people are dependent on someone else's opinion… {2M}*

This indicates that the understanding of success in the post-Soviet space may not differ much from this understanding in Soviet times, where the car was one of the important objects demonstrating high status. According to Oushakine (2000), the possibility of owning a car in Soviet times not only signalled a high income, but also the connections that were necessary for such an acquisition. Such an understanding of status and the ways to convey it to others, can be explained by responses to shortages, especially in the financial sphere, inherent in the Soviet Union (Oushakine (2000). This tendency was very clearly manifested in the days after the collapse of the union, when the so-called 'new Russians' appeared, who became dramatically rich and flashily demonstrated their status through such objects as cars, gold chains, and the presence of a cell phone where, "the taste of luxury, that is, one's distance from necessity, begins to express itself in one's ability to have more of the same thing and to pay more for the same thing" (Oushakine, 2000, p.113).

Small talk

This local cultural necessity to make small talk is found to be difficult for many immigrants whose culture does not require such ways of communication in daily life. For example, migrants from Vietnam perceive small talk as obtrusive conversation,

more like interrogation (Clyne, 1994). Australian migrant workers in factories are also puzzled when it comes to small talk (Clyne, 1994). Many migrants from Eastern Europe states, China and Asia (South-East) found the necessity to make small talk in NZ very unexpected (Holmes et al., 2012).

Similarly, four participants in this research expressed their scepticism about small talk perceiving it as fake, boring, uninteresting, useless, draining and annoying {6M, 7F, 10F, 11F}. This could be partly explained by the fact that, according to Russian scripts (cultural norms embedded in Russian language), sharing people's real thoughts and feelings is strongly accepted and common (Wierzbicka, 2002). Small talk requires participants to maintain the conversation on a different level as it is not generally accepted in their cultural settings, which is seen by some as the necessity of pretending to be interested in topics which they are actually not:

> *...Here everyone is sociable and ready for small talk constantly. Everyone is very smiling, it seemed very strange to me at the beginning, when I arrived, that I thought it was some kind of fake to be honest. Although it still seems to me from time to time that people are so polite because it is accepted here to be polite. But this is not because they really want to talk to you... {11F}*

> *...I grew up with such a cultural code where you need to open oneself, yes ... like [in the style of] Dostoevsky to some extent. Here it is not accepted and thus, I resigned myself, I don't fight there, I don't rush to open my soul to anyone, here ... [ ] ... I can, for example, maintain small talk, I can ... But I don't ... I'm somehow not interested in this ... {7F}*

> *...For example, at work, when they have these "Small-Talks", I generally can't stand them. I don't want to talk about it. Well, for example, there is the sun outside the window... Well, I kind of see the sun outside the window, it is like this. These conversations, they draw more energy out of me and do not give me anything, I kind of consider them useless. It was at the moments of these Small Talks - yes, that's it. I, I feel like I'm not from here... {10F}*

One of the participants mentioned above that they struggled with small talk at work {6M} which had a considerable effect on his management practices. The participant reported that the management style in NZ is different from those in his

home country and it took about two years for him to adjust to this difference. Although the participant attempts to manage these differences, there are indications that it is still hard for him to fully accept this style of management and he appeared annoyed about such rules at work. The issue faced by the participant was related to cultural differences as noted by Wierzbicka (2002), who found that it is normal in Russian culture to say "you are wrong" compared to Anglo culture, where such direct communication is not that acceptable. However, for Russians sharing their thoughts and feelings directly is more supported by the society rather than providing fake information:

> *…The solution of issues [at work] here is different. If, for example, I understood management before as I had to tell someone that you are not working well, I would come and say - comrade, you work badly and you have to do this and that, let's find solutions. Here it is necessary to start a conversation about, I don't know, "hello, how does your mother feel, are you doing well?" (and so on…); "By the way, I would like to say… Could we please discuss this? Although, of course, I do not want to disturb you …' [It takes a long time before you can actually say what you want to] [ ] The first two years, probably, I still used the management style, which was familiar to me before. I came and said - I need to do this. This is part of their job, I should not apologise, not to thank him and please him because this is part of his job! This is a normal attitude. For them, I sound very arrogant, it's kind of rude [for them] that I came and said that this should be done. They constantly pointed out to me that it should be done differently, it should be said in a polite way... It can only be understood when you plunge into their management style. The working style is different, very different, as well as the language and culture ... {6M}*

According to Holmes and Riddiford (2009), such small talk skills are essential for successful work in New Zealand, where a failure to master this can significantly reduce the quality of life and exacerbate the process of acculturation for the immigrant. The authors highlight that it is not possible to avoid small talk in the majority of workplaces in NZ, especially in the beginning of work shifts and before the end of the day and in meetings. More than that, suspicion on the part of New Zealanders of

behavioural norms that differ from their culture make it harder for those with difficulties in communication at work, including small talk (Holmes and Riddiford, 2009). As a result, the lack of good communication skills of some migrants may lead to employers not hiring them.

Ambitions and further development

Five participants saw locals as being less ambitious, less interested in further education and simpler compared to their compatriots {4M,6M,7F,9M,10F}. For instance, one participant shared a strong need for further development and achievement which she found hard to fulfil in the new cultural setting {7F}:

> *...It seems to me like something is missing [in my life], maybe this habit of stress, which is in our so-called cultural code. This habit of stress is missing, [habit] for some achievement, some kind of improvement, some kind of border crossing. {7F}*

Four people reported an absence in certain interests and knowledge with locals and mentioned that locals are less interested in certain types of intellectual topics on history, politics, cultural topics and education {4M, 6M, 7F, 9M}. One participant sees a lack of interests regarding history, politics, cultural topics among locals as a result of being geographically isolated and being a young country.

> *...As far as I noticed, they do not have deep knowledge in history or in literature - they were simply not taught this they seem to have a fairly young state. There is a difference, for example, in our common knowledge, architecture, they, again, do not have such architecture. Again, this is a young state, due to this fact that there are a lot of modern things here. But historically, they seem to be cut off from everyone. [ ] NZ-it is, as it were, such a small fenced off place or a city similar to somewhere high in the mountains, where they[people] seem to know everything about their own stuff and they know each other very well, but what is going on outside of the city, generally, they are not interested, they do not need it... {6M}*

According to Allport (1979), such attitudes toward locals can be related to a common defence mechanism of non-dominant groups, where they may begin feeling superior in relation to the dominant group. However, another reason for the above gap in

interests with locals may be due to the high level of education amongst most of the participants in the current research. Indeed, in 2013 the proportion of highly educated Russian-born immigrants (Russians make up the largest group among immigrants from Post-Soviet countries) was around 43%, comparing with around 17% of those born in NZ (Opara, 2017).

Employment

Work is an important aspect of life that has an impact on maintaining stability and providing social protection to immigrants; the ability to continue working is also understood as an assurance of their future success (Castel, 2009, as cited in Fabio & Blustein, 2016). Immigrants can face a number of difficulties associated with finding a job in a new country, such as hostile behaviour from locals who perceive them as competitors, as well as hidden discrimination from employers manifested in the preference of local candidates for leadership positions, and the providing much better career opportunities for the local population (Lee & Westwood, 1996).

Employment situation

In addition to providing economic stability and status to immigrants, employment is of particular importance for immigrants in terms of building relationships and becoming part of the local community (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Professional identity loss has been identified as a common experience among Russian-speaking immigrants in NZ. Maydell (2010) highlighted the need of Russian-speaking immigrants to be in skilled employment where they can realise their potential, which "was seen by them as a foundation of a functional self" (p.157). Current research supports these findings, where most participants had to change their profession for less qualified work or manual labour, especially during the first few years after moving to NZ. This was despite the fact that nearly all of the participants were highly educated and experienced professionals {1F, 3F, 4AM, 6M, 7F, 8F, 10F, 11F}.

> *...Life has changed, you know, it seems to me that it has changed for me, because I had a good job, I worked in an office [in my home country] ... [ ] My first job here [in NZ] was a housekeeper, a cleaner in a hotel. [And this is] After I worked in an office, I worked with directors in my home country... Here I worked in a hotel ... [ ] I had to clean toilets there... well, this is not a pleasant enough task... {1F}*

Some of participants describe this period as "downshifting", meaning that they had to choose a much simpler lifestyle and limit their needs {5F, 10F, 6M}. This contrasts to downshifting as used in the literature where it is depicted as a conscious choice by a person for a simpler and more environmentally friendly lifestyle (Kennedy et al., 2013). On the contrary, for them it carries an exclusively negative meaning and is not a voluntary choice but more a result of loss of their status. This is not surprising due to the popularity of consumption culture in the Post-Soviet Union and Russia (Oushakine, 2000).

Half of the participants have found better job positions mostly in other fields {4M, 6M, 8F, 10F,11F, 12F, 14F}. Interestingly, the majority of them have gained local education and qualifications {8F, 10F, 12F, 14F} and were more satisfied with their current employment, which supports the point that gaining local education can be an influential factor contributing to more successful adaptation (Spoonley & Chapman 2010):

> *…When you have already got a job, everything, in principle, is also quite favourable. There is more relaxed style of communication even at official level than in Moscow and in Russia. I even lowered it a little [working standards] ... When you adapt, you watch how others are doing [things], how the locals are doing [work] ... For example, I lowered the amount of official language in my work emails and began to communicate more freely. So, everything is quite friendly [at work], I did not encounter any conflict situations at work. There was no such situation like someone offended me, harassed, or showed some kind of racism. Personally, I did not encounter anything like that during my work experience, everything is also very positive and it is positive from two sides. When I worked, there were regular salary increases as well as positive feedbacks, it was comfortable to work ... {14F}*

One participant who had not studied in NZ, but was able to use his Ukrainian degree, said that it took two and a half years to get a job a bit closer to his profession but still in a different field. Similarly, Spoonley and Chapman (2010) found that, immigrants who studied and gained their qualifications in 'non-traditional' countries had a

significantly decreased rate of return compared to those who had studied in Canada (p.20):

> *…The first two years there was a constant downshifting, I basically took on any job, although I kept looking for a job in my specialty here. In the third year I was actually lucky, at the end, after 2.5 years, I found my job. They employed me, and I am continuing to work there. This is not very close to my specialty, but at least closer to what I did before ... {6M}*

Many participants shared their regrets about their lost career opportunities, most of them constantly coming back to thoughts on what career achievements they had missed due to immigration and comparing themselves to their former colleagues from their home countries {6M, 7F, 9M, 10F}:

> *…Another loss that bothers me is that my career growth has been stopped here. In Mother Russia, there was a career growth. [ ] Well, no one knows how [how would it be if I have not moved to NZ] ... Over the past ten years, the world has been changed a lot. Ten years ago, there was a small economic crisis and after that it [economics] was not developing very much. [ ] I had positions in Russia as a head of a department, a general director, of this type, a head of a department ... And here I have simpler positions, [much] simpler. Although, it may be simpler, it's not bad for me, you sit, as it were, from bell to bell, from 9 to 5. I finish work, then leave and everything is calm, my head does not hurt [worrying] about anything. But there is a feeling that if I had not left, I would have stayed, now I could work elsewhere. I could work, could be responsible for a third of the world in some multinational company, would sit in let's say Singapore or somewhere else in Europe. Although, no one knows… {9M}*

Maydell (2010) shared similar findings in her study of Russian-speaking immigrants in New Zealand who reported significant difficulties in searching for a job based on their qualifications and experience. However, this situation is typical not only for immigrants from the post-Soviet countries, and for many other highly educated immigrants in New Zealand, when they have to take jobs that are much lower than their qualifications and experience (Opara, 2017).

In the next extract, the participant reported that, despite her financial situation being significantly improved, her work experience is not recognised in NZ. She described losing her work status as the biggest loss related to immigration {3F}.

> *...Well, I can name the losses... This is my job and work status ... I was quite demanding [specialist] in my own field in my country. But here, of course, no one needs me [my skills] at all, and I could not ... I tried to get a job in my field, but no one needed my experience here. I was not needed. This is my loss that I lost my status exactly. I used to be a manager, but here I should sit at the reception…. Status is probably the largest [loss], yes ... [ ] Initially when we arrived, we did not work, there was a lower level of income. Now it has increased even compared to what we had in Kazakhstan - they pay well here… {3F}*

Two male participants mentioned different work hierarchies between NZ and their home countries {2M, 6M}. One of them sees this as a positive change to a less hierarchical organisational structure and better corporate spirit {2M}, while the other sees this as more negative as it makes it harder to manage people {6M}. These participants work in different fields, one of them has subordinates {6M} whilst the other does not {2M}:

> *... For example, [the organisation organises] barbecue at a construction site, when all the managers put on aprons there, they light up these barbecues and start to cooking meat there and share with everyone, or call a catering service. Everyone drinks there, let's say beer at the end of the working day, all together ... This is some kind of corporate spirit. In our country, [this is different] a person who gets some sort of a higher position [at work], even something insignificant on the site, they already… [act superior]. [It could be] some kind of master, [who has got] a lower managerial position, who is already putting on a shirt there, a white one, a helmet and no longer physically works. Although here you can complain even to the manager of one of the project managers, if you, let's say, come to sew up a wall, let's say from drywall and there is no insulation, and you tell him - I can't do it, there is no insulation - and he would bring insulation and would do the work himself so that you can continue ... This was for*

me... it just threw me into shock sometimes that it's not shameful to work whether physically or mentally...{2M}

...In Ukraine, some kind of hierarchy is more accepted. There are gradations, [for example] I cannot easily come to the director of the fabrics and say hello dude, how are you? Here, generally, the security guard can approach the director of my organisation, say hello and say "dude, how are you doing?" That, in principle, for me, in general like - "who are you [men]? ... Where did you come, what are you doing here?" ... But generally, in Europe it is of course more consistent. But clearer hierarchical structures are probably more common for Ukraine and Russia than the Europeans. I would say that Europeans tend to have a more hierarchical structure than New Zealanders, who even don't understand what hierarchy is and where to stop [where are the limits] ... {6M}

Indeed, New Zealand culture is known for the lowest level of power hierarchy (Jackson, 2008, as cited in Holmes et al., 2012), which is opposite to Russian culture (Voldnes et al, 2014). Another explanation as to why New Zealanders do not appear as ambitious may have to do with the cultural sensitivity of being seen to stand out from the crowd; the so-called "tall poppy syndrome" (Holmes et al., 2012, p. 1067).

Emotional outcomes

Most of the participants described having experienced difficult times and stress since arriving in NZ related to seeking a job {4M, 5F, 8F, 9M, 10F, 12F, 14F}. The stress was more severe during the initial period when the participants were on work visas and depended on their employee to stay in NZ {4M,8F,10F}. According to According to Parker and Kleiner (1966), such difficulties with finding a job corresponding to high status of migrants introduces additional stress and can even impair their functioning. Indeed, participants referred to emotional stress, hard times, feeling stressful, and so forth. For the majority of participants, the stress significantly decreased once they managed to find a job and got their residence:

…The most stressful moment was seeking for a job, with providing for basic needs, paying the rent, and so on. In this regard, there was the most stress, as at that moment… {14F}

…I didn't have such a depression, only probably when I was looking for a job for a couple of months…{3F}

Besides going through strong emotional stress related to job search, one participant also admits that she was close to depression, which was related to the combination of uncertainty due to job search and challenging events, including divorce:

…Then there was a sharp, well, not sharp, but fast decline, when you understand that despite the presence of degrees, brains in my head, and a desire to work, somehow it does not add up to what you want. I ended up with quite strong emotional stress… It was very difficult because it was such a strong pressure, purely psychological, and due to the fact that I also have … a very high level of responsibility, well, this would have been close to depression… {8F}

One participant found herself engaging in stress eating while seeking a job. However, she believes that this is not related to immigration to NZ, but more due to her personality traits and that she just generally cannot deal with the absence of a job {5F}. This participant kept repeating that this type of stress in not related to immigration, trying to seemingly deny even the idea of being stressed as a result of immigration. Denial as one of the defence mechanisms that can appear when someone is not accepting their reality in order to avoid negative feelings (Ogden & Biebers, 2010). However, the strong emphasis on denial and justification may be an indicator of difficulties and negative feelings, which the participant may be trying to suppress:

… At first, I did not work, I was under stress, so I put everything I saw into my mouth [overeating]. But then I threw it back, so everything is fine. But probably the stress was not due to the fact that I moved to another country or something else, in general I cannot sit without work…{5F}

Only a few participants managed to escape the stress of looking for a job in NZ. One participant was offered a job, with his employee providing support with movement

arrangements and any other enquiries, this allowing him to avoid most of the stress which other participants had to deal with. This participant had no English language concerns at work as he already had a high language proficiency. Additionally, they showed the highest level of satisfaction during their acculturation process:

> *...I didn't have the same immigration experience as the people who read [about immigration], wanted [to immigrate] and came with two suitcases ... I arrived at the prepared job, there was already a place to live, they [employee] already gave me a phone, a car, and so on. And not only that, but some of my stuff moved on a container, including some furniture and so on... {9M}*

In conclusion, employment difficulties are common for many immigrants in part due to the fact that some employers hire locals due to the belief that local clients prefer to work with locals (Dietz, 2010).

Alienation and other emotional outcomes

Alienation implies a certain division between a person and his social environment, associated with a mismatch in values and cultural norms, the presence of disagreements between a few or more groups, leading to feelings of hopelessness, anxiety and stress (Nicassio, 1983). Alienation can be worsened or caused by the loss of social support and the inability to find this in the new country, we well as a lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills (Miller et al., 2006).

Similarly, more than a half of the participants spoke about a sense of alienation related to language and cultural differences {1F, 4M, 5F, 6M, 8F, 11F, 12F, 14F}. Indicated was that a lack of knowledge about certain topics and local vocabulary impacted the socio-cultural adaptation and participation among many of the participants. Indeed, Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007) found that difficulties associated with communication in English have a negative effect on the adaptation of Russian-speaking immigrants to NZ. Similarly, the extract below shows difficulties to adapt due to communication issues of one female participant:

> *...When they start to communicate, they start using idioms, some kind of jokes, something that is based on past experience, which I do not have, because my childhood and adolescence passed in a different country. What*

is normal for them and what is part of their culture, for me... [is difficult to comprehend] I must first explain three hundred times before it comes to me what they meant... {8F}

Two immigrants shared similar experiences described them as intense feelings of helplessness and inferiority. One of those explained his feeling of alienation as if "you arrive like a 40-years old baby" {1F, 4M}.:

...Purely psychologically it was very difficult at first, especially when I was studying. Emotionally it was very difficult, it's like another planet. Even when someone would speak out on Facebook that you arrive like 40-year-old baby, because everything is different...{4M}

Three participants clearly expressed and accepted that they will be living permanently with feelings of alienation {4M, 8F, 12F}.

... I felt like an immigrant for the first time when we went to a comedy show, and they joked about some topics like, politics and old films. I was just sitting there... I didn't understand what they were talking about at all... [Despite the fact that] I know English... everyone around was laughing, everyone is discussing that ... And I was just sitting there, I felt so sad and lonely. That was probably the most [powerful moment] ... when I realised that ... It's very difficult to comprehend this, it's like Soviet cartoons - you either watched them or not... {12F}

... My opinion is that, my children more likely will not feel like immigrants [feeling different from the society], but not me. I am constantly... You will constantly face it because the culture in New Zealand is completely different, they have a completely different way of thinking, a completely different attitude in society, in groups. Additionally, no matter how would it, if my English was perfect, it is still not the English that they know ... [ ] I can never compare the degree of language proficiency with a native speaker who has learned [English] from childhood, and this is noticeable for example, it can be when you are talking about work, this is normal, but when they start, let's say they talk about some things like movies, music, sports, which are completely local, I may not even understand half of them. Of course, for

example, I knew the difference between cricket and croquet, but for me it was not very clear. The same is for example, about rugby, they are all fans of rugby here, but I have never really watched...There are some kinds of local musical groups, their childhood memories and some books they have read. For me this is a complete fog, when it happens, you accordingly feel like a third wheel, because you cannot say a word, you do not know it... {6M}

Interestingly, two female participants used the same phrase to describe their feelings of alienation at work, saying that they sometimes feel like a monkey, as being objectified, something to look and point at, like an animal in a zoo whom others find curious and exotic and make jokes about based on common stereotypes about Russians. However, the participants do not seem to be very upset about this, mostly joking about it; however, one participant found it a bit annoying {5F, 8F}.

...At one time I was like a monkey who was pointed at with a finger because I got into a company where there were only kiwis. And all the clients pointed at me and said like "This is [participant's name], she is from Siberia". It quickly got tired of course, but then it stopped. {5F}

... We are very different [with locals] and my feeling is that often they [co-workers] look at me like a monkey in a zoo like what else can she do? ... This is not bad, I do not feel offended, but the fact is that we are not like them, [this is] one hundred percent [true] {8F} ...

While some participants lost hope about changing their feelings of alienation, two participants reported that it had completely disappeared over time once they gained better language proficiency and an understanding of local mannerisms and humour {11F, 12F}:

... There were moments, when I didn't feel very comfortable, for example, when I met with my boyfriend's friends, they all speak quickly using slang and I did not have time to follow them and I felt a little such an outcast ... Well, not an outcast, but as if repulsed from the group, because I could not participate in the conversation properly ... Regarding jokes... If there was some kind of joke in my head, then I could not express it normally because I just couldn't keep up with the conversation. Here I am in these moments, I probably felt like ... well,

not like an immigrant, but roughly speaking as an outsider... Now there is no such thing at all, now everything has completely changed... {11F}

... Now there is no problem with the language, so I don't care who to communicate with, I no longer have a priority that I should communicate only with Russians. I communicate with those people with whom I am interested in, with those with whom I am pleased ... {12}

Maydell (2010) reported that some Russian-speaking immigrants in NZ experienced themselves as intellectually impaired and incapacitated individuals due to low English language proficiency. Similarly, one participant in this research was particularly worried about her linguistic abilities, sharing an intense sense of herself as not just alienated but mentally impaired and incapable:

... I seem to perceive information in jerks [partial]. When you don't understand, you feel a little bit like ... like ... mentally retarded a little bit ... [You feel] that you are a bit insane, because you don't catch up with conversation, but ... it's okay when you don't understand, [it is not the worst] ... Then you try to speak, and you understand that you speak so clumsy that you cannot normally say anything and you feel like some kind of guest worker, like Ramshan and Jamshut, who are the most comical characters [characters from Russian comedy show, migrant workers in Russia who speak with a very strong accent and make many mistakes in their speech] ... That is like [saying] "yes, yes" ... smiling with a dull smile with complete emptiness in eyes with the face of a degradant... This is probably the most difficult... [] I just feel like a disabled person ... just an inferior person. You understand that you are a smart enough person, that you can do something [that you have good abilities] and that you have enough intelligence for something better. At the same time, when you talk like this, like a child, you stand there ... [making incomprehensible sounds like] be, me – this is actually very difficult. This often happens often in the conversation ... {1F}

The same participant mentioned stress related specifically to social trust, which she called "a habit to stress" as a part of the soviet mentality characterised by being on guard, cautious, hypervigilant and suspicious {1F}:

…There are people who were born in the USSR, we are constantly afraid that we will be deceived, something will be done behind our backs, so we are constantly on guard, we never relax. Local people are more relaxed, they are like children [naive], they do not expect that at the same moment, at the same hour, someone will frame them. I have a feeling that this is the different, they just live, enjoying life... but we are constantly on the guard. I do not know about everyone, but with us - we must be constantly ready to go into battle… [ ] when you live... When you are born with this stress and you live with it all the time, this becomes normal, so you no longer feel it like stress, it's just normal for you. But on the other hand, this is good as you are always ready. No matter what happens, no one will ever take you by surprise, nothing will ever catch you off guard… {1F}

According to literature, developing countries have more issues with social trust, especially ones struggling with corruption (Fidrmuc & Gërxhani, 2008) which is known as a common issue in the Post-Soviet space (Beesley, 2015). Sapsford and Abbot (2006) also indicate that people from Post-Soviet countries have a low level of trust, with about half of the participants in their study agreeing with the statement that most people are not trustworthy. The low social trust in post-Soviet countries can be explained due to dramatic changes in the economic and political situation in the 90's (Adams et al, 2004; Sapsford & Abbot, 2006).

Changes

Many participants in this research reported changes in different areas of their life such as clothing style, food preferences, attitudes towards love relationships, and gaining new qualities.

Appearance standards

Three participants noted that they now make less effort regarding their appearance including dressing less formally and using less make up {8F, 9M, 11F}:

... And what of the positive, the weather is much better, that is, there is absolutely no need to think about winter clothes, winter boots and so on. In general, my whole style of clothing has changed. I brought here..., I have 40

ties hanging. And I wear these ties once a year, at a wedding and at a funeral. Mostly I just wear shorts and slippers... {9F}

... On the other hand, I like it... I have never been a fan of walking on heels and getting dressed, especially, like what is common in Moscow. You always need to wear make-up to work ... It was completely normal [there]. But here I just feel good wearing sweatshirts and sneakers - this is absolutely my style and I really love it. Of course, I when I go to work, I dress more professional [and put more efforts], but still there is no such thing as constant makeup, styling or anything else. I really like this here in NZ ... {11F}

However, some immigrants are not that happy with changes in the appearance of standards. Remennick (2007) found that more than half of the female Post-Soviet immigrants participating in the research (aged 52-75) were keen to retain similar clothing style which was popular in their home country and which they had grown up with (Korotchenko & Clarke, 2010). Similarly, the extract below describes an experience of how some migrants from a particular period almost embody their home country from that period in their new country – their home country has moved on but their practices point back to the time they left the place:

...I also noticed from the Russian community that some people still remained the same, as, if they left in the 90s, when there was a show-off [culture]...[ ] Especially Russian ladies who had a deep neckline [revealing clothes with deep neckline] and they were wearing a stiletto heels and a gold ring on each finger. This is how they left [Russia], and they thought they were still in this fashion and that's how they stayed at the same level at which they left. Although now Russia has changed a lot over these 20 years ... {4M}

Physical well-being

Many participants noticed improvements in physical well-being due to changes in lifestyle, including nutrition and greater physical activity amongst them and their loved ones {3F, 5F, 6M, 8F, 9M, 10F}:

... There is more healthy eating [in our life] now, [more] proper nutrition. This is probably more connected with the increase in earnings and financial

well-being. We began to eat better quality food and to travel more. Again, it probably has more to do with this fact than with another country. But here it became possible ... {5F}

... Additionally, as children grow up, it is interesting to observe the changes in them, because this is also a new environment for them. Due to the fact that none of us had such experience as learning in NZ at school, this is interesting. Therefore, in general, my children have become physically more developed, without question. My daughter runs and if at school [in Russia] it was 300 meters [distance], after that they were exhausted for a week ... But here she goes in for sports herself [more interested] ... {8F}

... It seems to me that I get sick less here and generally I feel better, maybe a little bit [better], yes. Even my eating habits have changed, I changed our diet a little in order to somehow adapt it to local conditions, because some products are not even available here ... {3F}

Housing and comfort of living

Three participants reported a reduced comfort in home living due to the quality of houses in NZ affecting their feelings of happiness and comfort {6M, 11F, 14F}. Two of them found housing is too pricey compared to their home countries, which seems to be quite annoying and unfair for these participants:

... Apart from emotional issues, let's say, relatives ... The only thing which is negative is the comfort of living. A house in New Zealand, as it turned out, is not really a house ... This is like a pine board and a small plaster board separate you from the street, this is not very good ... So housing is the main problem here, probably for all immigrants. It is, firstly, fabulously expensive, and secondly, as if for this money one could arrange a palace somewhere in a more or less developed country ... {6M}

... I remember in the winter here it was really like you walk at home in three pants, in uggs and you just have a feeling, this feeling of some kind of miserable and unhappy just because you are cold all the time. [] By the way, this is what I have experienced for the first time in NZ, you cannot warm up

at home. And I'm such a person, I like to walk barefoot ... But you ... you're cold at home, you always huddle [from the cold] ... {14F}

Low temperatures in many New Zealand dwellings (around 30%) are indeed a serious problem covered in the literature (Bennett et. al, 2016). This is a result of insufficient heating and lack of insulation, which can lead to various health issues.

Gender roles

Two participants reported changes in their attitudes toward gender roles in relationships, they found the principle of equality as a very positive idea for relationships {8F, 11F}.

...... Well, you know that Russian families come here with the Russian way of life and when the female can see that it is possible to live differently, this introduces some imbalance... [ ] In Russia as it happened among my friends, acquaintances from those families that I observed ... It's such a classic[situation]... [It is] Russian patriarchal family structure. A woman is first of all a cook and a housewife secondly ... No, [of course] she can certainly work somewhere ... But if the children are sick, not fed, then these are the woman's problems. A man must work, bring a mammoth [like in old times; earn the money] and then can calmly lie down on the sofa. Therefore, for me, of course, it was an insight when my friend who is here [living in NZ]and her husband is local ... [When] she comes to me after work, calls him and ask: "how are you, okay? Well, I'm going to see my friend" ... I say, what about dinner? She says, "Is he a five-year-old child, won't he figure it out? These are his problems, today I have dinner with you and he dines with whatever he finds. In an extreme case, the dairy is around the corner, he has money. He is not a little, he will go and buy..." {8F}

...In Russia traditionally the wife cooks, washes, cleans, the husband works, although this is changing these days. I like the fact that, for example, I don't need to cook, clean or something else. We do it equally, mutual. My boyfriend helps me, he can cook and wash, do all this. Naturally, I do it to a greater extent, but ... I like that there is no such thing [expectations]...{11F}

Home and relationships left behind

Remoteness of NZ

Some participants mentioned the distant location of NZ makes it harder to maintain relationships with friends and family {11F, 14F} and that some important connections are being lost due to this fact {4M, 5F, 6M, 7F, 11F, 14F}. Some participants also noted that the remoteness of NZ is a negative factor for them in the Co-VID pandemic situation, increasing their feeling of being far away from their home country, friends and it being impossible to visit relatives {3F, 4M, 6M, 11F}:

> *...The big changes are that we came to a completely unknown country on the other side of the world, on weekends you can't even go to your parents so easily. At that time [when we immigrated] we had Skype, there was a possibility of a video communication with relatives, so it was not very difficult, but still a big change in terms of being so far away in another part of the world, another time zone...[takes more efforts to find suitable time for communication...{14F}*

> *...Communication with your friends, acquaintances and colleagues with whom you worked with breaks off, because of the difference in time zone, it becomes to zero over time. [ ] NZ is too far away...{4M}*

> *...Yes, I would say that I feel emotionally unstable. It's not that I have a break down or something like that, it's just an internal state, but it's hard. It's also hard due to the fact that immigration is most likely a very selfish decision. I left all my relatives there, I have a mother there, I have a grandmother, and now there is a lockdown [Co-VID-19 pandemic], and I can't even come home. I don't know when I can go there, and if I would be able to go at all. Regarding them, they cannot fly here, it is too far and expensive and I cannot fly [due to the lockdown]. Even if I could fly, this is again, I could go there, probably for two weeks, and it's expensive. It turns out that a lot of connections are actually broken...{6M}*

Technologies

According to Boccagni and Baldassar (2015), the use of the Internet and technologies for social support is becoming a common practice among many migrants

where their emotional lives can be partially or even fully realised through online communication. Similarly, three participants mentioned the importance of technologies to maintain close friendships with those who stayed in their home country or moved abroad {5F, 13F, 14F}. Such connections through the use of contemporary technologies made up a significant part of these participants' social circle and were facilitating stability for the participants. One participant reported that she had no friends in NZ, and that all communication with close people and friends was conducted online {13F}:

> *...Now, when the technologies already exist, we are all scattered in different countries around the world, all my friends. This is how we continue to communicate; it doesn't really matter ... [ ] when friends are like that, you know, this is the famous situation when you don't need to talk and see each other every day to be friends. When you pick up, it is where you left off [the conversation], and it doesn't matter how much you haven't seen each other. This is valuable ... {13F}*

Family and relationships issues

Relatives and friends of immigrants may suffer from mental and physiological problems resulting from the intense stress associated with the loss of a those who have immigrated (Marchetti-Mercer, 2012). According to Falicov (1998), they may feel abandoned, which can lead to anger towards the immigrant. This condition may have a significant impact on an immigrant who tries to keep maintaining relationships, which is shown in the extract below, where the participant's mother is reportedly trying to blame her for moving to permanently, the participant reported that she works with a psychologist partly due to these issue {7F}:

> *...The only thing that worsened my emotional state is that my mum is in Russia, our relationship has significantly been worsened by my relocation. I am the only daughter (in our family) and my mother did not like New Zealand... [ ] She has been here twice, she didn't like it, it's not just because she didn't like it, but rather that she feels abandoned as she says that she has helped me with money when I entered the university here. She says "I did it myself - I signed my [death warrant]" ... And this is worsening the emotional state very much. If we talk about what is lost, I*

had a very close relationship with mum before I left and it was quite painful like "cutting the umbilical cord" ... [ ] Guilt is of course there, and I'm working with this guilt a lot... I am fond of psychology, and I have been working with a psychotherapist for about 2.5 years, from time to time, sometimes more regularly, not only for this occasion, but in general too... {7F} ...

Two participants reported that their decision to move to NZ was not supported by their relatives {7F, 8F}. Two participants described strong feelings of guilt towards relatives they left behind {7F, 6M}.

...Many relatives, for example, simply do not understand why [I left Russia] as [according to their opinion] everything was great there, everything was just wonderful: [I had] a luxurious new apartment, a car, vacations abroad, relatives, parents, friends. Well ... it's my choice, I feel better here... {8F}

In the extract below one participant blames himself for leaving his mother and grandmother while experiencing inner conflict between emotion (feeling guilty) and rationality {6M}:

...Immigration is a selfish decision and I am the one who is responsible for this decision. I cannot say that someone else made this decision. Accordingly, there is a certain sense of guilt, but on the other hand, I say that the rational should prevail over the emotional. I understand that despite the fact that, for example, you can say that "[why have you moved?] You were in Ukraine, you had everything there and lived somehow..." But unfortunately, there are advantages to being here. Here is a more stable society, more open to children. I believe that generally I have made the right decision, no matter what. Well again, that doesn't stop me from feeling guilty ...{6M}

Two participants ended a long-term relationship while being in NZ {8F, 10F}. One of them said it was a hard decision which made her go through a grieving process {10F}. Another participant said that her divorce was expected, but that immigration just made things happen faster {8F}. Despite the fact that the divorce was not a huge shock for

the participant, it still strongly affected her psychological wellbeing and was a reason for consulting a psychologist:

> *...Yes, it was certainly difficult, because we had such a pretty good relationship and I probably did not expect that [we will break up] ... On one hand, I expected, I knew that I would go and I want to live in NZ, I would have to make a choice between NZ and coming back to Russia where we get married and have children [in the future]. [It is like] on the one hand you seem to be ready for this, but on the other you are not particularly ready. Because, in principle, such a serious break up in my life has never been before. This, of course, also surprised me a lot and maybe shocked. On the one hand, you seem to ... intellectually understand that this is how it should be, but emotionally it is ... this pain of parting or the pain of losing a loved one {10F} ...*

> *... We moved together, but later we decided that it was time to break up, then he came back [to Russia], and I stayed here with the children. [ ] You know, it was obvious[before], it would have happened sooner or later. It's just that in Russia it would be easier in the sense that sharp corners there were smoothed out by the presence of our own house, and not just one but many; relatives, friends, and so on. Immigration is just like a litmus test; it pulls everything out ... {8F}*

This situation is quite common and has been noted by researchers, serious disagreements arise in the families of immigrants from post-Soviet countries due to issues of preserving or changing their usual way of life (Miller et al., 2006). In its turn, family conflicts and stress in immigrant families can cause depressive moods and affect the process of acculturation, especially for those from Post-Soviet countries due to cultural specifics and the specific attitudes towards family which may be inherited from Soviet past (Miller et al., 2006).

Russian-speaking community in NZ

According to Horenczyk (1997), many immigrants are dealing with a reconstruction of perception and attitudes towards their socio-cultural group. Similarly, seven participants in this research tended to criticise compatriots in NZ and

showed negative attitudes towards certain practices related to their culture of origin {1F, 4M, 5F, 6M, 8F, 9M, 12F}. Part of this negativity is also related to the Facebook group uniting Russian-speaking immigrants in NZ {1F, 4M, 5F}. For instance, one participant faced outrage from a Russian-speaking immigrant about his move to NZ {4M}.

> *… Although, even at the Russian meeting where we came, there was a lady about 60 years old [Russian-speaking], she asked, and where are you from? I say from Moscow. She said in such an aggressive form: "Why do you keep coming here? Why do you need to move here?". I answered that I am not taking your work away. She said: "Yes, but we came here for our children's sake, while you were in Moscow, where everything is good. So why do you [and other Russian-speaking immigrants] keep coming here?" … But…why do you think that you are doing the right thing for your children, and we are wrong? So yes, such a thing happened… {4M}*

The next extract shows the perception of continuous competition among Russian-speaking immigrants, which made the participant not want to participate in Russian community events:

> *… The first time when we arrived, probably the first two years we went to some kind of Russian matinees, which were arranged by the community. We believed that in this way we are supporting the language for the child. But somehow it has turned out to be very difficult, due to the fact that when people in Russian community somehow try to come to such gatherings, everyone tries to prove that they are better than everyone else. I have this feeling all the time ... {12F}*

Facebook group

Most of participants mentioned the Russian Facebook group as an important information source, as well as a good source of instrumental support in the Russian-speaking community in NZ. However, for many participants the group seems to lack emotional support and does not provide a safe environment to ask for such support, as some people in the group seem to act sarcastically and passive aggressively. One participant understands this issue as local culture blocking certain forms of expression

which then needs to be released in other spaces –similar to a pressure cooker, pressure builds up which then needs to be released {5F}:

> *...I periodically go there [to the Facebook group] when I'm really bored, to practice sarcasm. So not many people take this community seriously. It is more like a platform for people to release aggression that cannot be released outside. Because you just cannot act like in Russia, if someone stepped on your foot in the bus, you cannot scream at them. So, during the day, everyone will suppress it [their feelings], and then they will go to the Internet and put it on poor people who may just come in to ask for some help or something else. So, 90% of people there just go there to practice trolling... {5F}*

Ethnic conflicts

In addition, interviews with some participants indicate a tense atmosphere between a few participants from Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan {1F,2M,6M}, which is expected given the current political situation in the post-Soviet space, associated with the strengthening of intercultural competition and interethnic conflicts as a result of the collapse of the USSR (Rubin & Snyder, 1998). Similarly, participants associate this situation with political motives {6M} and negative experiences of relations with Russians in NZ {1F, 2M}:

> *...We don't participate in Russian speaking community, well, I would say partially participate, but not that much. It's just that, let's say... I participate in Ukrainian. Due to the fact that the war has divided the communities, we are more involved in Ukrainian than we are in Russian. Probably due to the fact that it all comes to politics. After it comes to politics [political arguments], then it gets personal... [ ] We have our own Ukrainian community, we all get together at least twice a year, this is on Independence Day and Christmas, we hold joint events, and sometimes there are concerts. In general, I participate in the activities of the Ukrainian...{6M}*

Discrimination

The opportunities and limitations that immigrants encounter after moving to a new environment has a significant impact on the outcome of acculturation (Bankston & Zhou, 1997). Discrimination refers to one of these factors, and is therefore it

important to take it into account in acculturation research (Birman et al., 2005). Allport (1979) proposed that minority groups may start to use such protective mechanisms as detachment, avoidance behaviour and passivity to avoid discrimination, prejudice and protect themselves and their future. Psychological defence can manifest itself in the form of feeling superior in relation to the dominant group, or vice versa, adopting the traditions of local culture and abandoning the importance and value of one's own cultural characteristics (Allport,1979).

Being overly ambitious about constantly improving one's education and rising income is also a way to combat the prejudices of the majority (Butler-Bowdon, 2010). The rise in ethnic identity shown by some participants may be associated with perceived discrimination (Rumbaut, 2008). Similarly, Birman and Trickett (2001) found the same pattern in their research on youth refugees from the Soviet Union (as cited in Birman et al., 2005). The likelihood of exposure to discrimination can be reduced through proficiency in the recognised language in the country of immigration at a more acceptable level (Birman et al., 2005). Indeed, Clement et al. (2001) has found that the proficiency in English among Indian immigrants in Canada significantly improved the quality of communication between immigrants and locals.

Discrimination was mentioned by four people in this research, and was aimed at them {10F, 14F} and their relatives or friends {3F, 4M}. Such views of New Zealanders as being quite discriminatory and intolerant to outsiders are common enough (Louw & van Ommen, 2020). One of the extracts below describes physical, direct and non-verbal discrimination, in an act of aggressively claiming space, implying the message 'this is my space, stay out of it, you do not belong in my space'. Another extract refers to a verbal and passive aggressive act, and was understood by the participant as a reproach that there are too many Russians in NZ:

> *… And my husband, as he has Asian features [Kazakh], he once was met with discrimination, but it was also wordless, he was shoved at a pedestrian crossing by a local white man, yes, he was like this with his hand, his elbow touched him as if on purpose. It was sad for me. And of course, it hurt him very much, I remember he was talking about it a lot … it touched him emotionally... {3F}*

... And, by the way, I remembered - there was only one moment, but then again I was still studying, and at home I cut my finger very badly, somehow unsuccessfully I grabbed the knife, cut my finger badly, and blood was pouring out ... well, I didn't cut it off, but it was badly cut. So, we had insurance, we went to the nearest medical part of my institute. The nurse there says...after she had processed everything, there was nothing terrible there, just a lot of blood ... She said - Are you from Russia? I said - yes, I was sitting there all frightened ... She said - Is there anyone left in Russia at all? [reproachful, passive aggressive] Such a phrase is like everyone from Russia has already arrived here. Maybe now I remember the only time when they said something to my face...{14F}

In addition to gender discrimination from local people at work, one participant {10F} also experienced discrimination from Czechs due to the invasion of USSR in 1968 (Zaslavsky, 1981), which further supports the point of the importance of considering the influence of the political factors involved.

... What I met - I met with racial discrimination, but not from the locals, from the Czechs here and I met with gender discrimination from the locals at work ... [ ] I had a Czech boyfriend. From him, I also sometimes heard, not in my direction, but in the direction of Russian people, that we are all so bad, they brought communism... [ ] They wanted to develop socialism, but here we are ... we did everything badly. I say - well, these are Soviet people ... And they do not want to say that Soviet people did it, they say Russians. Thus, they see Ukrainians and Belarusians like brothers, but Russians are the enemies. I went once, there was the festival of Czech cinema in New Zealand and on the first day of this festival, they presented Pelushka's film. This film is just about the Prague spring and how, in my opinion, August 1968, when the Russians brought their troops to them in Czechoslovakia and how life changed. There were several speakers and there was a woman who had to leave [Czechoslovakia] after these events of 1969. She was then still young, a teenager, and there was so much hatred for Russians in her speech... {10F}

Some people shared experiences of hidden nationalism from local/hidden discrimination towards immigrants {4M, 6M} and Russian women {11F}. The last

one can be related to one of common stereotypes about Russians female immigrants often negatively presented in New Zealand media as 'Russian brides' (Maydell, 2010):

> *... I don't think that New Zealanders have a very normal attitude towards Russians or immigrants in general, because it seems to me that they have the feeling that we are taking their guys away. At least it seems to me that way, also they are not very interested in being friends ... Moreover, I was not the only one who noticed this, my girlfriends also think that they keep aloof ... {11F}*

One participant highlights the rural\urban divide in discrimination, portraying rural NZ as being more conservative {6M}:

> *Despite the fact that the country officially accepts immigrants, if you travel around small villages you see that maybe with the tourists, yes… [they accept tourists]. But I do not speak for tourists... If you live there, then they reject you, their community actually does not welcome immigrants if they live with them. It seems to me so; I notice such features - they do not really want to accept immigrants into society. They make it very clear… {6}*

The explanation for such a trend could be the lower ethnic density of Russian diaspora in rural areas in NZ (Opara, 2017), which may be related to a higher level of hostile attitudes towards immigrants living in less concentrated areas and the absence of social support available there for immigrants (Jurcik et al., 2013). Additionally, experiences of discrimination and prejudice from locals can be related to economic conditions and the particular position of the immigrant's country of origin in the world (Darvin & Norton, 2014). Often, immigrants may be considered locally as coming from less developed countries, which in turn can influence their positioning in society (Darvin & Norton, 2014).

The most common position in the community towards minority groups can also be understood by considering their representation in the media (Hodgetts et al., 2004), where they can be a subject to various prejudices and discriminative attitudes (Maydell, 2010). According to the Maydell (2010), both Western and New Zealand media tend to negatively represent different groups of immigrants. In New Zealand media, Russian-speaking immigrants are no exception, and they are often portrayed

inappropriately as in need of help, unhealthy and criminal, which are also common stereotypes of Pacific populations (Loto et al., 2006).

Chapter 4: Conclusions

This chapter is devoted to the main findings and insights derived from the analysis and includes recommendations for further research and practical implications for a wide range of specialists in mental health and social work. The results of this study provide information on various cultural practices and their impact on the psychological well-being of immigrants from post-Soviet countries, given their similar historical background, culture and language.

The thematic analysis of the interviews in this study indicates a number of positive and negative influences on the acculturation process among immigrants from post-Soviet countries. Negative aspects were related to cultural differences with locals, including friendship and relationship attitudes, the practice of small talk, perceived lack of ambition and further development, employment issues, loss of status, alienation, housing issues, lower comfort of living, negativity towards compatriots, the remoteness of NZ, family and relationships issues, ethnic conflicts in the Russian-speaking community, and discrimination.

Positive practices facilitating adaptation to NZ include: a perceived lower level of social pressure, the availability of local education, lower dress and beauty standards, improved physical well-being, more equality between genders, the use of technologies for connection with relatives and friends, and intrinsic support in Russian-speaking community (e.g. help with employment). Emotions and emotional states associated with certain practices were found that influenced the process of acculturation and the psychological state of the participants, these changing over time.

Most participants demonstrated signs of cultural transformation during their interviews, in the form of changed practice and active involvement in the local culture and language. For example, many displayed active engagement with the English language in the interviews even though the interviews were conducted in Russian. Many participants used English vocabulary instead of Russian words from time to time, some also changed English words to the Russian manner through applying Russian rules and adding Russian endings and suffixes, a tendency also noted by Maydell (2010) in her research on Russian-speaking immigrants in NZ. Such linguistic changes can be a sign of a shift in immigrants' identities as they are exposed to

everyday communication in a foreign language, which can lead to the transformation of their identity, including the formation of a hybrid identity (Duff, 2015; Vukić, 2009). Such changes are common for immigrants as they are required to build a new identity to acquire legitimacy in a new environment (Darvin & Norton, 2014).

As indicated, changes in practices mentioned included such areas as appearance standards, attitudes towards gender roles, better involvement in physical activities, and altered food habits. Some local practices, however, were harder to adapt to, even for those who have been in NZ for longer. These practices were related to small talk, which was perceived by some participants as quite negative, and which affected not just their social life but the participants' work practices. In terms of the latter context, most of the cultural learning seemed to happen at work through communication with colleagues, both New Zealanders and other immigrants.

The importance of relationships and friendships for better adaptation among Post-Soviet immigrants has been identified. However, buildings relationships with locals was described as difficult and less common among the participants in this research due to the various cultural differences reported and the perception that New Zealanders as being more socially settled and less open to new connections. Thus, the need for closer friendships among participants could not be met among locals especially European New Zealanders partly due to their relational expectations and cultural norms (Wierzbicka, 2002). Another identified barrier to building friendships with locals was a lack of similar interests including some intellectual and cultural topics.

At the same time, the local Russian-speaking community was not perceived as a safe enough place by some participants due to the presence of a certain level of aggression. The lack of emotional support in the community mentioned by these participants may have led to more participants relying on communication technologies to seek the support outside of NZ. Nevertheless, not all participants were able to receive emotional support from close people who remained at home. Some faced rejection and misunderstanding, especially from their relatives, which aggravated their psychological well-being. Similarly, family dynamics applied both to relations with relatives who remained at home and those who immigrated together was described by Ward and Geeraert (2016) as a significant factor in acculturation process. This may

lead to additional stress for both immigrants and their relatives suffering from feelings of abandonment (Koneru et al., 2007; Falicov, 1998).

The majority of the participants shared feelings of alienation resulting from various social practices. The reason for this sense alienation can be partly explained by the prevalence of negative images of them and many minority groups in NZ media including Russian speaking immigrants (Maydell, 2010; Loto et al., 2006). A few participants experienced discrimination related to them or people they are close to. Considering the lack of support in the Russian-Speaking community and judgemental attitudes by some of these community members, such experiences may exacerbate isolation and can contribute to deculturation as a result of rejection by both locals and the Russian-Speaking community (Berry, 1986); this, in turn, may lead to serious mental health issues (Bhugra, 2004).

The theme of employment was a significant topic with a lot of worry, stress, regret and other negative emotions expressed, especially in relation to the earlier stages of migration. Most participants reported immigration meaning the loss of better work opportunities available in the home country as well as changes to their professional identity, which some of participants overcame later through gaining a new specialisation. Participants who have been in NZ the least amount of time (around three years) also shared their wish to study in NZ in order to regain a higher status which they had in their home country. According to Spoonley and Chapman (2010), this strategy can indeed lead to a more successful adaptation. Additionally, New Zealand's remoteness is mentioned by some participants as a factor that enhances feelings of separation from people they were close to and who remained in their home country.

Acculturation strategies

It is necessary to deal with the new environment and various cultural differences, immigrants reacting in different ways towards their ethnic group and locals (Sam & Berry, 2010). For some it leads to preferences of the same-culture social groups (separation), for others it allows connection to other-culture groups especially when same-culture practices are felt to be a nuisance (assimilation); some people may withdraw themselves from contact with both cultures (marginalisation), while others choose to maintain involvement in both groups (integration). However, the four

acculturation strategies are not unchangeable and depend on various aspects of immigration such as external factors (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Based on interviews, it was found out that five people tended towards integration as acculturation strategies {8F,9M,11F,12F,14F}, while two participants tended towards separation {4M,13F}. Three people have changed their strategies and the level of participation with both the culture of origin and local culture overtime {5F,7F,10F}. One of them changed acculturation strategy from separation to integration, another one did the opposite. The third one described that she has found herself avoiding both cultures while her studying in NZ, which has been changed to integration after her being employed in her professional area. This highlights the importance of which practices are dominant at the time; for example, some practices (e.g., engaging with others in a welcoming work environment) result in greater integration.

However, it was difficult to determine a dominant set of strategies for the other four participants as they tended to choose acculturation strategies based on their current life situation (e.g. necessity to work, maternity leave, looking after children, lockdown due to COVID-19, ethnic tensions in Russia-speaking community). Thus, they had to use different strategies, allowing participation in both local culture and the culture of origin {2M,3F,6M}. These practices were slowly transforming the participants, making them more integrated and eventually some of them observed many cultural changes in themselves. One participant (1F) would like to integrate further, but feels her language limits her ability to communicate effectively with locals. She was not interested in maintaining contact with Russian speaking people, which meant the loss of any social support from compatriots. As a result, she communicated mostly with her husband, who had migrated with her. This kept the participant isolated from participation in both cultures. This can support the point that considering acculturation strategies in terms of individual choice does not take into account the social construct and its role in relation to systems of meaning; acculturation strategies are not always what people choose, it can be also determined by the environment and various social and political factors (Bowskill et. al., 2007). More than that, acculturation strategies are fluid and situational depending on various factors and experiences (Sam & Berry, 2010). To conclude, there are thus obvious limitations of Berry's fourfold model, which loses out on the contextual nuances of the acculturation process.

Thus, successful acculturation can be understood as a particular flexibility in practice that requires sensitivity to context. Similarly, Ward and Geeraert (2016) suggest that little attention is paid in the literature the study of the process of acculturation given its dynamism and context (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Furthermore, other simplistic acculturation models including those of culture shock are rather limited (Befus, 1988). Despite the fact that some of participants in this research described the process of acculturation as similar to the U-model (Lysgaard, 1955) and W-curve model (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963), the description of the majority was difficult to fit into any specific model, and looks more like a mixture of the elements of existing models.

Reflecting on the theoretical framework used

I found symbolic interactionism framework quite helpful especially for the interviews in my research where the main focus was on subjective and symbolic meanings embedded in shared language and culture of the participants as well as the way they created and recreated meanings during the acculturation process. These meanings appeared within a specific cultural and social context and were analysed from the perspective of a wider framework of the Social Practice Theory. This provided a better understanding of the everyday practices and its meanings in considering the cultural background of the participants and their worldviews.

Considerations for future research

The results show the direct influence of the emotional component on the process of acculturation and its dynamics, which may be a significant area for further research on acculturation. At the moment, this area of research is poorly understood, despite the fact that emotional and physical expression depends on the cultural context (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). Some participants in this study spoke about the need to suppress unacceptable emotions in a new cultural environment, causing a certain level of negativity pouring out into the Russian-speaking community and also affecting their general psychological well-being. Additionally, this study also found the communication difficulties of some participants associated with small talk, which requires further investigation. Similarly, these difficulties have been found among other immigrant groups, for example, those from Eastern European states, China (Holmes et al., 2012) and Vietnam (Clyne, 1994).

In the same vein, there is a lack of research into cultural differences in the emotional sphere, although emotions are closely related to and directly affect health status (Consedine & Magai, 2002). Different ethnic groups can differ in the way emotions are expressed and their intensity (Consedine & Magai, 2002). Culture shapes those emotional expressions that we can observe in different ethnic groups through the system of rewards and punishments (Consedine & Magai, 2002). Expectations are also formed about the ways in which emotions are manifested (Consedine & Magai, 2002). Wierzbicka (1999) argues that Slavic people, including Russians, Poles and Ukrainians, have a tendency and need to express negative emotional states, which is distinct from other cultures. Thus, the question arises of how Russian-speaking immigrants cope with the need to hide negative feelings while living in Anglo-American societies. It would be the useful to understand how they regulate their emotions due to new standards in the country of immigration as the strategies they use may have significant interpersonal and psychological effects. For example, if methods of cognitive reappraisal and reformulation are not used and emotions are simply suppressed, it can have negative psychological and physiological consequences (Arens et al., 2013).

Additionally, in the course of the interviews, it was found that those who lived in NZ for about 10 years or more at times struggled to answer interview questions related to changes in the process of acculturation. For example, several participants noted that after so many years it is difficult for them to distinguish between changes associated with getting older and the acculturation process. Indeed, despite the enormous amount of research related to the topic of identity shifts, there is not enough information available locally about how this process occurs in adulthood (Fadjukoff & Kroger, 2016), which). This makes it harder to understand the mutual influence of aging and the acculturation process.

Given the rapid changes in the world, questions arise related to the disunity of generations and further research is needed related to the difference in the mentality of different generations, especially those living in times of great change (Pishik, 2010). It can be assumed that coping strategies that used to work in Soviet culture, may not be appropriate and effective in the West and can be worsened by immigrants from Post-Soviet countries losing their social networks. For example, according to Miller et

al. (2006), common coping strategies in the USSR were not applicable to life in the United States.

Practical Implications

Migrants often suffer losses from trauma caused by being pulled out of their family or the support group. (Dow, 2011). Similarly, many participants shared traumatic experiences related to the loss of loved ones. Such loss can lead to serious issues of adjustment at family and individual levels and can bring chaos and imbalance in immigrants' lives (Dow, 2011). Thus, one expected focus in providing psychological and counselling services to help immigrants is the processing of this loss, which inevitably will include going through a grieving process. Also, family therapy may be of use, especially in the situation where those who were left behind are going through traumatic experience themselves. The ideal, although not always achievable, solution would be the provision of a free bilingual mental health service to ethnic minorities by specialists able to understand their native language. This would make a big difference in NZ among cultural minorities, since most services providing psychological help and support target English-speaking populations.

Solutions could include the creation of a mental health hotline for immigrants where they can get help from the advisors or counsellors speaking their native language including Russian. National Telehealth Services in New Zealand do not provide such opportunities in various languages although they use the help of the interpreters (Ministry of Health, 2020). Using interpreters may increase the feelings of alienation for some immigrants. According to the report, many users on National Telehealth Services for whom English is a second language, including those with high English language proficiency, prefer to speak with the operator in their native language (Ministry of Health, 2020). Some of the National Telehealth Service users are worried to use the help of the interpreter due to the sensitivity of confidentiality and anonymity (Ministry of Health, 2020)**.** Additionally, it could be helpful to conduct free cultural learning sessions where recent migrants can learn effective ways of communication with locals, including practising small talk and learning about common topics specific to the local culture. There are no such free courses available for migrants at the moment (Immigration New Zealand, n.d.).

In conclusion, this research sheds some light into the acculturation practices of Post-Soviet immigrants in NZ, the cultural differences they face and the ways they deal with these. Such knowledge is useful for social workers, psychologists, mental health specialists and any other workers dealing with this group of immigrants. I would recommend specialists to take into account difficulties among some immigrants of this group in maintaining small talk and the reluctance to engage in this, favouring a more direct way of speaking. In addition, it is important to be aware of common ways of expressing and sharing negative emotions in Russian culture, that may seem overly intense to a person from the West.

Since Russians in NZ are the majority group, it is likely to be assumed that a Russian-speaking immigrant is from Russia. It is thus important to be careful though, as some nationalities may perceive this negatively, given the presence of different ethnic tensions in the post-Soviet space. Also, stereotypical jokes about Russian culture are never a good idea, as not everyone takes this positively and this can irritate some immigrants and intensify a sense of alienation. A possible consideration for community workers and career advisors is to direct immigrants (especially newcomers) to work in communities with a higher percentage of immigrants, as this can facilitate adaptation and reduce stress levels and feelings of alienation.

Mental health professionals are advised to take into account the fact that referring to and working with a specialist may be perceived as stigma by immigrants from Post-Soviet countries given the social practices of the Soviet Union and its particular attitude towards mental problems. Additionally, psychotherapists should take into account the general openness in Soviet and Russian culture to the discussion of personal problems, emotions and feelings with close people.

Personal Reflection

I close the thesis with a reflection on my own experiences as a Russian immigrant, especially in light of my engagement in this research project. Regarding my personal experience of acculturation, I have gone through periods of changing acculturation strategies several times. Initially, I set myself the goal of improving my language skills at an accelerated pace by trying to limit communication with Russian speakers. It really helped me to plunge into the environment, however, the level of stress for me significantly increased because I experienced quite strong feelings of alienation and could not fully benefit from the social support of the Russian-speaking

group. A strong feeling of alienation made me choose a separation strategy for several months where I spent most of the time with my family as I needed to take a break. Afterwards, this has been changed to integration, when I began participating in the Russian-speaking community group events. Thus, the strategies that I used were modified depending on how many psychological resources I had in a given situation and social practices that I encountered. Similar to many of the participants, the social practices at work and various educational institutions enriched my cultural skills, and I had to improve my small talk skills. This helped me to gain better English language proficiency and regain my status and professional identity. In this process my feelings of alienation decreased significantly.

Regarding stage-models, I cannot distinguish clear stages that I went through. My emotions and states were quite strongly determined by situational factors associated with success in language skills, study, employment and family situation. It is important to note that conducting this research was a very important practice in my acculturation experience. During the literature review and after interviews with the participants, I realised how much my identity had changed and, similar to other participants, I began to perceive some aspects of Russian culture more critically. For example, I have become less straightforward in communication and began to expect this from others, my views on gender roles changed. My daily practices, friendships attitudes and expectations have changed.

This study of social practices has significantly helped me in revaluating my views of my own culture and has helped me to look at myself from an outside perspective. My hybrid identity made itself felt in the process of writing this thesis: Sometimes Russian expressions popped into my mind, whilst at other times it was English expressions. Sometimes I had to express and write ideas in Russian (and then use a translator), whilst at other times I could express these in English. Like many immigrants, I personally went through an identity 'crisis', a revision of my values and meanings, which ultimately led to a greater awareness of myself, my personal boundaries, needs and values.

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Acculturation and psychological well-being

of immigrants from post-Soviet countries in

New Zealand

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher: Viktoriia Volkova
Current program of study: Master of Science in Psychology, School of Psychology, North Shore Library Building, 229 Dairy Flat Highway, Albany, Auckland

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Hello

An invitation to participate in the research

My name is Viktoriia Volkova and I am currently completing a Master of Science in Psychology at Massey University's School of Psychology. For this research project I am conducting interviews to understand Post-Soviet immigrants' life experiences and their psychological well-being in New Zealand. I am looking for people from Post-Soviet countries residing in New Zealand for at least three years and who are intending to stay in NZ permanently. Your personal experience is very important in order to gain knowledge related to the topic as well as to develop recommendations for social services, psychologists and mental health workers.

If you are interested in participating, please consider that the interview will take about an hour and will be audio recorded and transcribed for further data analysis. Also, you will be asked to fill in the demographic form and sign a few documents in order to ensure that we protect your confidentiality and anonymity. This will include filling in the participant consent form and, in due course, the authority for the release of transcripts. The latter form is to ensure that after the interview you have had the opportunity to check the transcript and had a chance to make any changes.

Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions before signing, including on the day of the interview. A $0 voucher will be given to each participant to cover their time expenses.

If you are willing to participate, I will contact you to discuss a convenient date and time that suits you (e.g., including holding the interview after the COVID-19 Level 4 has been concluded). Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews will take place on-line. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Overview of project

This research paper will investigate the experiences of immigrants from post-Soviet states and their journey through the immigration and adaptation process in New Zealand (NZ). The main focus of this investigation will be identifying and understanding what processes or experiences improved or hindered the participants' psychological well-being while they adapted to life in NZ.

Using semi-structured interviews, the research aims to gain greater insight into the following:

- What are the NZ immigration experiences of persons from former-Soviet countries and how have these experiences changed over time?
- Which immigration experiences do the participants identify as having improved or hindered their acculturation process and sense of well-being?

Given this analysis, the intention is to identify appropriate practices and interventions that assist NZ's immigrants from former Soviet countries, especially in terms of supporting their psychological wellbeing.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

Participants (over 18 years old) will be generally recruited via Facebook and be interviewed online. All participants are required to have been residing in N Z for at least three years and intend to stay in NZ permanently. A $30 voucher will be given to each participant to cover their time expenses.

Project Procedures

In-depth interviews (about an hour) will be conducted online in English or Russian (as appropriate). These will be audio-recorded and then transcribed in English. Transcripts will then be checked by the participants prior to data analysis. No original names will be used and only pseudonyms will be provided. A *release of transcripts* form and *participant consent* form will need to be signed, whilst anyone involved in the research will sign the *confidentiality agreement* form.

Data Management

The recordings and personal information of the participants will be stored safely by the researcher and disposed of at the completion of the thesis. Participants will have access to the project findings online after the completion of the thesis. Any information which may lead to the disclosure of a participants' identity will also be removed.

Participant's Rights

Please note that you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question
- withdraw from the study within a week of completion of the interview
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview

Project Contacts

Contact details for the researcher and supervisor are provided below. Do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions about the project.

Viktoriia Volkova (Researcher): lifeabroadnz@gmail.com

Dr Clifford van Ommen (Supervisor): c.vanommen@massey.ac.nz

LOW RISK NOTIFICATION

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be *low risk*. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85271, email *humanethics@massey.ac.nz*

Appendix B - Transcript release authority

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Acculturation and psychological well-being

of immigrants from post-Soviet countries in

New Zealand.

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the

interviews conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and

publications arising from the research.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....
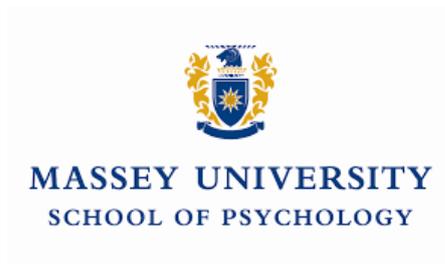
Acculturation and psychological well-being of immigrants from post-Soviet countries in New Zealand

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet attached as Appendix I. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study within a week of completion of the interview.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.
3. I agree/disagree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix D - Information brochure "Psychological/Mental Health Services in NZ" (in Russian)

Службы психологической помощи в Новой Зеландии

Доступны 24/7

- **1737**
  Если хочется поговорить
  Звонок и текст по номеру бесплатный

- **Lifeline**
  0800 543 354
  Помощь в кризисных ситуациях

- **The Depression helpline**
  0800 111 757
  По вопросам связанным с депрессией

- **Alcohol/drug helpline**
  0800 787 797
  По вопросам связанным с алкогольной/наркотической зависимостью

- **Healthline**
  0800 611 116
  Поговорить с медицинской сестрой по вопросам связанным зо здоровьем

- **Suicide Crisis Helpline**
  0508 828 865
  Кризиская линия по профилактике суицида

- **Samaritans**
  0800 726 666
  Телефон доверия Психологической службы "Самаритяне"

- **Gambling helpline**
  0800 654 655
  По вопросам связанным с игровой зависимостью

- **Parent Help**
  0800 568 856
  Поддержка родителей, по вопросам воспитания и другим вопросам родителей

- **Youthline**
  0800 376 633
  Молодежный Телефон Доверия

  *Бесплатное сообщение на 234 или email talk@youthline.co.nz,

  *Чат онлайн: youthline.co.nz/web-chat-counselling.html
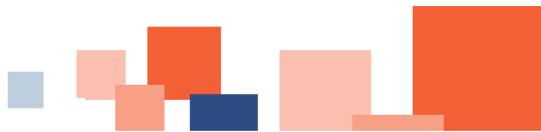
Depression.org.nz

Этот сайт помогает распознать и справляться с депрессией и тревогой. Там вы можете найти онлайн программу по самопомощи. Бесплатное тексовое сообщение ➔ 4202.

Auntydee.co.nz

Данный сайт - бесплатный инструмент, специально разработанный для тех, кому нужна помощь в решении различных проблем.

Depression.org.nz/get-better/the-journal

Журнал предназначен для того, чтобы научить вас навыкам, которые помогут более эффективно справиться с легкой и умеренной депрессией. Работая с программой, вы будете обучены принципам и применению некоторых из наиболее эффективных методов самопомощи. В ходе шести уроков вы узнаете как может измениться ваше мышление в случае депрессии, как физическое здоровье может повлиять на психическое здоровье, а также сможеть воспользоваться простым методом, помогающим решить проблемы, с которыми вы сталкиваетесь в повседневной жизни.

Calm.auckland.ac.nz

Онлайн-ресурс, созданный и управляемый доктором Антонио Фернандо, старшим преподавателем Университета Окленда. На сайте есть инструменты по борьбе со стрессом и для управления жизнью в целом.

Likeminds.org.nz

Этот сайт - часть национальной программы против стигматизации и дискриминации людей, страдающих от психологических заболеваний.

Mentalhealth.org.nz

Для получения дополнительной информации о поддержке человека, находящегося в трудной ситуации, о заботе о своем психическом здоровье и о том как восстанавливаться.
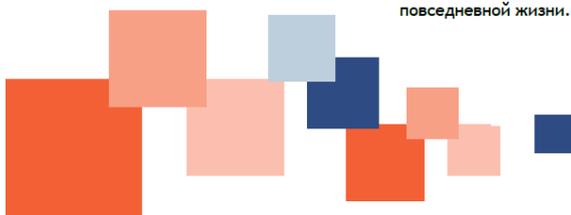
Appendix E - Confidentiality

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Acculturation and psychological well-being of immigrants from post-Soviet countries in New Zealand.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, Viktoriia Volkova, agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project "Acculturation and psychological well-being of immigrants from post-Soviet countries in New Zealand".

I will not retain or copy any information involving the project.

Signature: _____ Date: 27.03.2020

Appendix F - Demographic form

Age	
Gender	
Country of birth	
Ethnicity	
Education	
Work experience	
Visa status	
Numbers of years you have lived in New Zealand	

Appendix G - Questions

1.Could you tell me the story of how you came to be in NZ?

2. What differences have you noticed between your home culture and the local culture(s)?

       What has surprised you the most and why?

3. How has your life changed, if at all, since immigrating to New Zealand?

4. Are there times when you become more aware of being an immigrant in NZ?

       If so, could you tell me about some of these times?

5.Has immigrating had an impact on your physical and emotional well-being?

       If so, in what ways?

6.Are you involved in Russia-speaking community in NZ and compatriots?

       Do you feel a need to maintain your culture and participate in different cultural events?

7.Are you involved in local New Zealand community?

       Do you feel a need to maintain involvement in the local culture and participate in different cultural events?

8. Since immigrating to New Zealand, have you ever experienced discrimination. If so, could you share some details about this?

9. What are some of the things that has made it easier in becoming used to NZ culture and in settling down?

10.Are there any other things that we have not spoken about that you would like to share?