

Perceptions of Russian-Speaking Immigrants: A Case Study in Australia

Oleg Cohan Shovkovyy

Naresuan University International College,
Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, Thailand.

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted in response to one of the most pressing and challenging questions on the agenda of many government offices around the world - "What can be done to better integrate and assimilate immigrants into host communities?" The qualitative study employed ethnographic methods of gathering data, where 170 Russian-speaking immigrants were observed by the insider in their natural settings, for eight months, and at different locations in Brisbane region of Australia; informal, unstructured interviews were conducted with 27 individuals. During observations, it was noticed that many immigrants had experienced one or another sort of difficulties that prevent them from smooth integration into the host society. The further analysis of data derived from immigrants narratives revealed emerging themes, which allowed identifying five factors that, perceived by immigrants as obstacles to integration: (1) employment, (2) education, (3) healthcare, (4) government assistance, and (5) discrimination. Following the logic of inductive reasoning and assumptions of grounded theory, that is seen as a research method in which the theory is developed from the data, the researcher uses research findings to build behavioral Model of Assimilation/ Integration of immigrants. Developed model not only accurately explains why immigrants resist integration but also offers the pathway to further quantification for the measurement of assimilation.

Keywords: Australia, immigration policies, integration, public administration, Russian-speaking diaspora.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, immigration and its management have become highly charged topics in contemporary policy and politics as well as subjects of extensive scholarly analysis [24]. Today the word immigration takes a significant space in the political discourse, feeds populist narratives and influences electorates [46]. The topics related to assimilation and integration of immigrants are also among the most important for many government offices around the world. However, numerous manifestations of immigrants' inability to assimilate to conditions of the new homeland point out some faultiness of current immigration policies and practices, which is being made based on faulty and incomplete data [11]. All this ultimately results in the growing migrant crisis in the world, which, according to [34], is already the most challenging problem for the contemporary world. The questions of social and labor market integration of migrants could be a significant political, societal,

and economic challenge for any country that has many immigrants. And the statistical data by the Australian Bureau of Statistics [2] suggests, that Australia is the eighth country in the world by the number of immigrants. According to the same source, in 2019, about 30 percent of Australian resident population, or 7,529,570 people, were born overseas, net overseas migration to the country in 2018-2019 was 249,700 persons, or 4.9 percent higher than previous 12 month period and, very likely to increase in the coming years [47]. Whereas the increases in international movement is not a problem on its own, particularly relevant is question not how many immigrants to accept, but what is more important, how to assure, that newcomers and their heirs are not causing any discomfort or troubles to the host society which, in turn, often results in negative attitudes and discrimination reported by [13]. In this regard, the task of managing international migration is not a question of controlling the borders but, it is a matter of maintaining transnational peace, which also assumes inner peace and national cohesion, suggests [6]. Despite all the enormous attention that stands out to this issue, the opinions, voices, and perceptions of immigrants addressing immigration-related issues not considered or even neglected [14]. At the same time, the critical questions in this field traditionally addressed by studies based on surveys and census data [36]. A better understanding of experience and perceptions of immigrants toward the receiving country is essential for the development of efficient programs to assist them in their effort to integrate [37].

To address the existing gap in knowledge on perceptions of immigrants, the current qualitative ethnographic study conducted by an insider to a Russian-speaking community, provides a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to look at the problems of integration through the eyes of immigrants themselves thus, from a different perspective. For this, the researcher becomes a part of the immigrant community in the Brisbane region of Queensland, Australia. Subsequent analysis of qualitative data obtained during almost eight months of participant-observations and interactions with members of the diaspora, allowed the researcher to notice some difficulty experienced by immigrants in their attempt to integrate into the host society. According to [50], such a situation is conditioned by at least two circumstances. Firstly, by difficulties of parting with stereotypes and habits from the past, and secondly, by the objective or perceived factors that contribute to forming negative perceptions towards the host country, thus do not support integration. As for the first, it is a situation when most immigrants, being unable to re-examine their new reality and left on their own without any or with limited support from the host country, doomed to be locked into the time loops of past lives indefinitely. With regards to the second circumstance, the factors hindering the integration could be either real or perceived. Whereas the real issues from time to time addressed by authorities, the perceived remain as if behind the scenes, often unseen or escaped from the attention of authorities. Thus, by looking at the perceptions of immigrants, the current research is setting a task to identify some factors that prevent Russian-speaking immigrants from integration in the host society of Australia. In this regard, especially important for understanding the phenomenon is the choice of ethnographic research method employed by the study to cope with this task. Because only the ethnographic research could provide insight "into aspects of social life, including perception and values, which other research methods are unable to capture" [17]. The insider ethnography used by the researcher also makes a significant contribution to the further development of behavioral science and particularly to study of individual's behavior. It helps to reach far corners of representations and reifications of individual's reality and help to "understand the quotidian human processes by which this reality is experienced and constituted" [33].

Research Question

The research is guided by the idea that by reporting their personal experiences of living in a new country, immigrants themselves, intentionally or accidentally, may point out some specific moments that otherwise may be implicit. Thus, by setting the research question, “What perceptions of Russian-speaking immigrants towards Australia affect their integration into host society?” the researcher hopes to use this knowledge to identify the factors that affect processes of assimilation/integration of immigrants into the host society. Then, if the same thoughts were repeated in interview accounts of several migrants, it could be assumed, that particular situation is not an isolated phenomenon but is a regularity or a seeking factor that needs to be addressed. The importance of studying the perceptions of immigrants for a better understanding of what affects assimilation/integration is indicated by the studies of [9], and [31]. According to Hendriks and his colleague, a better understanding of immigrants perceptions opens a promising pathway to further development and improvements in the domain of assimilation and integration

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

Today’s immigration research is generally built around leading theoretical frameworks that come from different disciplines, as well as around some critical features of international migration [39]. According to the same scholar, migration study mainly concerned about the reasons and motivation behind movement on both, sending and receiving sides, social infrastructure that facilitates migration, and the policies which governments adopt to address the forces of international migration, but does not consider perceptions of immigrants as a factor. Many migration-related theories are trying to analyze and explain the primary causes of emigration and immigration, relatively few studies focus on the behavioral perceptions of migrants towards the migration and some of its circumstances [1], [5], [8], [60], whereas behavioral perceptions understood as the motives for migration. In the course of the literature review, the researcher did not find studies on perceptions of immigrants towards destination country. The attitudes of immigrants also excluded from promoted by [45] and others, “an integrated approach of various migration theories,” used to explain different processes and prerequisites for international migration. Such an imbalance in approaches to studying migration and immigration, suggest the existence of the gap in the base of knowledge on this topic, which the researcher proposes to address by studying perceptions of Russian-speaking immigrants towards the host country.

The idea that perceptions of individuals affect the way how they behave is not new. It is fundamental for the Cognitive Theory of Motivation and as well as to numerous behavioral models used to explain the causes of an individual’s behavior. By analogy with a well-known Model of Reasonable Action by [23], shown in Figure 1, many behavioral models group all factors contributing to individual’s behavior under two main categories: external and internal forces [19]. And here, the main constituent of those inner forces are individual’s attitudes as it is shown in Figure 1.

The way Fishbein and Ajzen [23] define attitudes as a feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness toward a given object, is very similar to how the researcher proposes to develop the current study – to look at the perceptions of immigrants towards the host country. Thus, it can be assumed that the attitudes of Fishbein and Ajzen model are very similar to perceptions as seen by this study. Now, that the need to study the perceptions has received its theoretical confirmation, it is necessary to present a conceptual framework behind the study.

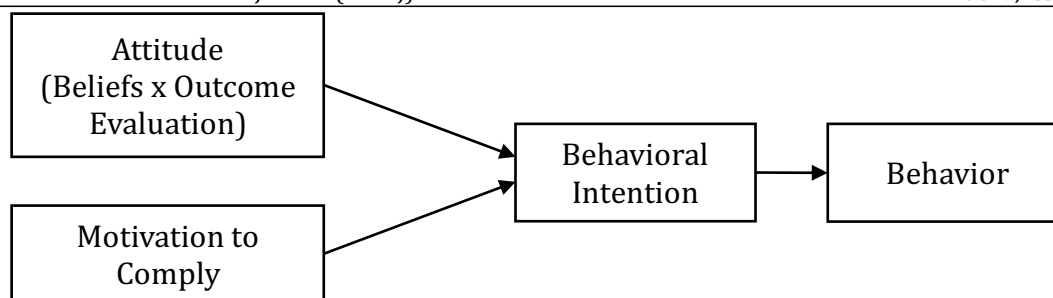


Figure 1. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action

Led by the premise that for studying the life experience of people is not necessary to be guided by any theories [22], the researcher builds a conceptual framework of the research around postulates of the grounded theory. Guided by the research question, the study aims at the identification of factors that, according to immigrants, prevent them from assimilation/integration with the society of the host country. To do so, the researcher became a part of the Russian-speaking community in the Brisbane area of Queensland in Australia. After the researcher established a good relationship with community members, the researcher will be selecting the candidates for the interviews. Those will be the individuals with whom the researcher will manage to establish a good rapport. The data from multiple unstructured interviews will be recorded against interviewees accounts throughout the whole length of the study. The purpose of these interviews is to make respondents by themselves, in the form of casual plot telling, to describe the life futures in Australia. At the same time, throughout the study, the researcher will be taken observation notes on the life of the immigrants, which, later, will be used for cross-reference and validation. Thematic analysis will be used to make inferences from the volume of raw data obtained from interviews and participant-observations. The theme which was repeated in several interview account will be considered as important thus, will be reported as the findings of the study. Since, one of the tasks of the grounded theory is to generate new theories from data [57], the researcher will try to organize findings into meaningful theory or model with the purpose to explain how exactly processes of assimilation/integration are being affected.

Definitions

For this study, the word immigrants used to identify all those who, regardless of their motivating reasons, decided to change affiliation and the country of residence thus, permanently settled in a country other than the country of origin [27].

Similarly to how it was done by [10] and [42], the words integration and assimilation are used interchangeably to describe the extent of self-determination by immigrants, to which they identify their cultural orientations, expectations, and values aligned with those of country of residence, Australia. In simple words, it is how much do immigrants consider themselves as of being a part of the host society. Thus, the integration is seen not as a task of achieving a full resemblance with the host society but as a process of self-identification, which is a “vital part of the process of integration.” [59]. At the same time, self-identity is a part of the collective identity, which makes individuals, groups and societies a whole [41], [59].

The word diaspora refers to all those, who “share similar characteristics, particularly country of origin, mother tongue, and have extensive contacts in the host countries” [35].

The research adapts Schachter and colleagues' definition of perceptions as individuals' interpretations of reality, surrounding, physical and emotional sensations, feelings, and experiences [48]. With application to the current study, it is how Russian-speaking immigrants interpret various aspects of their life in Australia.

METHOD

The research is a qualitative case study investigation that employs an explorative, ethnographic design, which considered to be a useful approach towards understanding complex human behavior, experiences, and perceptions [26], [29], and can reach a type of knowledge that often is not accessible to other methods [43]. It employs ethnographic methods of gathering data such as participant-observations, field notes, and interviewing the key informants, who were keen to share their experiences voluntarily, in their natural surroundings, and with whom the researcher managed to establish a good rapport. The choice of the research method was facilitated by the fact that the researcher himself, for more than eight months, during 2016-2017, was a member of a few Russian-speaking communities in the Brisbane region of Queensland, Australia.

To observe lives of Russian-speaking immigrants daily at their homes, in the work-places, during some cultural events and sports activities, on weekends at churches and prayer houses as well as at other places of socializing, was employed an active participation technique, where the researcher becomes a member of the groups and becomes a part of their culture [52].

Scope of the Study and Population Sample

The presence of a good rapport, that considered by an extensive research community as one of the main determinants of a successful interview [16], [32], [40], [53], served as the primary qualifier and decisive factor that determined the number of interviewees. Throughout the study, such rapport was established with 27 immigrants; all of them became interviewees. Therefore, the research data, in the form of written accounts of unstructured interviews, was collected from 27 individuals, the number, which quite well corresponds with a conservative estimate of sufficient size of sample recommended by [15].

The field notes were taken at nine locations (study sites) within the Brisbane region of Queensland, where approximately 170 individuals were observed in their natural settings and on different occasions. The number represents active members of different communities that the researcher had a chance to meet during various social gatherings. Researched were adults, without any differentiation by gender, ethnicity, social status, or country of origin, immigrants of first and second generations, most of who were residents of Brisbane and its surroundings except for a few visitors from other cities in Queensland and Victoria.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

Interviews and participant-observations, two primary data gathering methods of ethnographic research [18], [44], [53], were used to collect data from a population sample. All interviews with 27 individuals were conducted in Russian, the mother tongue for many participants, and the researcher himself. Observational data were collected from easily accessible by the observer locations, such as venues of various social events as well as private homes of immigrants and, at the convenience of the researcher time. Interviews with the same individuals were often taken place at different locations and passed in several stages. Considering how it was happening, those were unstructured

interviews, which [28] called non-directive conversations, and which [53] consider as one of the most suitable methods of interviewing in a qualitative study done by an insider. Informal conversations allow researchers to discover “complex discursive manifestations of underlying opinions that usually do not appear in responses” [56].

In most cases, the conversations were happening in the presence of other community members, which served as an assurance of the credibility of plots; thus, the question of truthfulness or ambiguity was not raised. Those stories formed kind of backbones of interviewees’ accounts to which, later, during further communications, other information, and facts such as field notes from observations were added. Additionally, the researcher also took records of anything of importance noticed during observations such as a type of employment, a degree of education, interests, place, and conditions of residence, family composition, habits, and much more.

Data Analysis

The researcher adopted two different approaches to analyzing qualitative raw data of making inferences or what [32] called a corpus of data collected during the interviews, during observations, and note-taking. At first, thematic analysis and codification adopted from [15] used to analyze data for similarities and differences and then to group it under some meaningful categories that represented the patterns appearing across several observations. Later, an interview analysis, that implies the careful examination of the interviewee’s account on the presence of emotive words which could indicate underlying meanings suggested by [21] and later by [30], was used to validate the accuracy of the thematic analysis and to compliment categories identified in the first step with some omitted information. Then, the field notes taken at different locations during observations were used to verify interviewees’ accounts or what [4] called - to conduct a cross-analysis. Guided by the idea that negative and positive behavior is a function of personal perceptions, which in turn tends to be disproportionately influenced by evaluatively negative characteristics of the target [38], the researcher assumed, that negative in its essence inability to integrate is predetermined by evaluatively negative perceptions towards factors that may inhibit this integration. Thus, the researcher decided to focus only on the negative perceptions of immigrants.

Interviews

Since most informants belong to the communities whose members well-aware of personal accounts of each other, maintaining what [54] called internal confidentiality while reporting was probably the biggest challenge for the researcher. It was apparent that any attempts to provide a rich description of interviewees might lead to confidentiality breaches via deductive disclosure, which occurs when the traits of individuals or groups make them identifiable in research reports [25], [51], [58]. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that there is no specific, practical guidance on disguising respondents’ identities and preventing deductive disclosure in qualitative research [25], [58]. Merely removing the most apparent identifications such as names, addresses, and personal characteristics would not help as there were also contextual identifiers that could be found in every life story [32]. Guided by Wiles’ advice, the rich descriptions of interviewees were not published. The research analyses data collected from 27 informants introduced in this paper under the following nicknames: Interviewee 1-27. Informal, unstructured, personal, and group interviews were conducted at different times, places, and on separate occasions. The main objective of such at ease conversations was to get the person to talk about life in Australia as much as possible. The data

account of each respondent was built during those interactions and was complimented by many months of observations.

Demographics of Participants

Out of 27 interviewees, 16 were males and 11 females aged between 22 and 65, 25 of whom belong to the first and 2 to the second generation of immigrants. Among those interviewees were some pensioners, housekeepers, cleaners (in this article called workers), factory and manufacture workers, builders, engineers, doctors, investors, the taxi driver, and business owners. The professions of interviewees were current on the moment of conducting research and, in 23 occurrences (all immigrants of the first generation), were different from what it was back in countries of their origin. Only one of these reported jobs required a degree; thus, another 20 higher degree holders were employed in low-qualified works, quite different from what respondents did before immigration.

Based on self-evaluation, only seven immigrants have English language skills that are not satisfactory for people who already stayed in the country for some three-plus years. Only three have managed to perfect their English skills to the level of native speakers. Each of the respondents could freely communicate in Russian and some other languages.

As for residential status at the time of interviewing, ten individuals were Australian citizens, eight were permanent residents, and nine were in the country on the different long-stay visas. All non-citizens were already at the various stages of obtaining Australian citizenship soon.

All respondents, except for the four, have similar or quite approximate levels of disposable family income around \$45,000 - \$70,000 a year; these numbers quite well correlate with data of the [3]. Most, if not all, of the interviewees and observed, belong to one or another religious stream of Russian or Protestant Christianity, such as Pentecostals and Seventh Day Adventists as well as Baptist Church.

RESULTS

The thematic analysis based on codification, data grouping, and data reduction, suggested by [15], led to the identification of five themes which were repeated in several interviews accounts thus, thought to be essential for answering the research question; namely, these are perceptions of employment, education, healthcare, government assistance, and discrimination. While selecting these topics, the researcher was guided by a pragmatic, step by step method of theme development advocated by Creswell so, the findings will have the meaning and capacity to address the researcher question.

Employment

The most frequently sounded in immigrants' narratives, which indicates the significance of the issue, were various concerns related to employment and labor relations. This is understandable as almost all the interviewees, with a small exception of a few self-employed individuals, business owners, and investors, arrived in the country with limited livelihoods and not for a holiday. The essence of these employment-related concerns comes down to two things – the inability to find a job in the specialty declared in immigration application and very slight prospects for career growth. According to Interviewee 14, with more than 30 years of experience working in the country, "the

career ladder for immigrants in Australia is very short, and except for a decent financial standard of living, it is almost impossible for an immigrant to obtain any new status." The difficulty of getting any job Interviewee 4 explains by "a particular demand for medical doctors, IT specialists, and scientists only, whereas the rest professions here are entirely unwanted, but you will understand it only after arrival."

On the other hand, to work in low-skilled jobs, educated immigrants, in view of employers, are too well-educated or cannot stand the competition from "Asian and Indian students, who are ready to work for peanuts" (Interviewee 25). Other problems associated with getting even elementary work are often unreasonable requirements for English proficiency and too many regulations. In words Interviewee 25, "even such a simple job as a cleaner needs some local papers and admittance for which, it is also necessary to study!" So that to hit the ground running, the foreigner would need to present a local job experience, and Australian references as well as possess excellent English skills and have some knowledge of Australian working practices and standards. Thus, the initial ardent desire to get employed and work for the good of new fatherland as soon as possible is destroyed by the harsh realities of the Australian labor market.

After some time is needed to understand the specifics of the local job market, usually on depletion of financial savings, many immigrants see a way out of the situation either in retraining for new qualifications or in accepting unskilled and low paid work. In both cases, the new jobs are quite different and not as qualified as those back home. It not only results in the emergence of negative feelings towards the host country but also undermines the idea of integration as it goes against the shared belief that:

The true-life in Australia begins only after you found a stable, skilled job. From that moment, you automatically move to another level - you are changing your housing, car, shopping cart, and the ways you socialize and make new acquaintances. Overall, psychologically, you begin to feel about the same as any other educated individual back to the country of origin, and eventually, you become an Australian. (Interviewee 11).

Education

The research data suggests that without exception, all holders of foreign qualifications, degrees, and certificates are facing the same problem of acknowledging their merits by employers, organizations, and institutions. Even the fact of legalization of those eminences by assessing them with the Australian Government Department of Education and Training or other designated bodies does not change the state of things, in particular, "a complete lack of interest in international educations, which somehow not even considered as education" (Interviewee 22). This statement idea was echoed in the narrative of Interviewee 27:

Not only Russian, but any other foreign education is not accepted here. With this, I run into my own experience - my economic degree from Russia and MBA from Europe were not a matter of interest for my potential employers at all. From their point of view, even the TAFE certificate from Australia would be more useful.

The most affected by such an ignorant system are holders of humanitarian, economic, and managerial degrees. None of the interviewees with these or similar qualifications from their home countries did manage to pursue the same career path in Australia. The way out of this situation could be retraining or learning new knowledge, for which immigrants have neither time nor finance

in abundance. Because, at best, “one will need a year or two to be retrained in the basic qualification while wasting time in some unskilled jobs to meet the rental ends somehow” (Interviewee 15), it is clear why this irritates immigrants. Especially upset are those middle-aged, educated immigrants, who, like no one else, value their time. All of them reported a loss of self-confidence and disappointment by the country that upholds such a system of hidden discrimination.

Healthcare

With regards to the Australian healthcare system, the opinions of the respondents diverge, whereas half praise it, another scold. The two things everyone agrees here are the high cost of medical services and expensive prescription drugs, which is something different from what is in countries of origin for many interviewees. Such a state of things is compounded by the fact that conditionally-free social health system Medicare, which could significantly reduce the cost of medical services, is not available to everyone. Thus, concludes Interviewee 1, a medical professional with many years of working in Australia:

Think twice before making any move and, if you have a chronic illness, frequent allergies, or skin problems, immigration is not for you. Do not believe in fairy tales about social medicine. The reality is that being sick in Australia is an impermissible luxury.

Until gaining access to Medicare, which offers some security and relief, the majority must seek ways to deal with this situation. No alternative options here are an appeal to unofficial community doctors and traditional medicine. So-called our doctors could do more than officially prescribed by their posts; the therapists could provide a small operating aid, diagnose heart disease, deal with the musculoskeletal system problems, and even do some minor plastic corrections. The community doctors can prescribe a long-term sick-leave, reduce the cost of some examinations, or assign a disability category. Generated by this situation, a sense of inferiority and discontent on the side of the immigrants reinforces by the fact, that many foreign-made drugs are not available in Australia due to regulations, which makes parting with immigrants’ habits and preferences especially painful.

Government Assistance

Expressing practically a unanimous agreement of all with whom the interviewer had a chance to communicate is how Interviewee 7 answers the question about the availability of government assistance to immigrants: “during the first two years you cannot count on any help, only in case of force majeure. The exception here is the allowance for children.” And even in areas where such support exists, it is usually minor, not useful, and not for everyone. For example, according to Interviewee 24, the Australian Government Department of Human Services (Centrelink) not only does not stimulate a job search but, on the contrary, encourages to refuse short-term works and employment because the works it offers are not attractive:

If I stayed at home and did nothing, I will get \$480. On the contrary, if I worked five days in quite hard physical work and spent almost 10 hours traveling, I would earn \$680. It is only 200 (!) dollars difference from which I will need to deduct the cost of travel and public catering. All this makes the fact of accepting such work merely meaningless.

The only assistance in fields of education and professional training that specific categories of immigrants can count on is free courses on adaptation and the English language. Known for low qualification and indifference of their teaching staff, they perceived as being ineffective and unpopular among immigrants. Interviewee 26 evaluates the effectiveness of free compare to paid

courses as: "the same time learning gives different results - those who pay for their education begin to speak English, and those who do not pay, do not speak."

Separately it is necessary to say a few words about preschool education such as nursery and kindergartens. According to immigrants, the average cost of 100-150 and more dollars per day for many, especially low-income families, is quite overwhelming. The essence of things does not change the fact that Centrelink partially refunds this expense.

Another aspect touched upon by immigrants is a complete absence of state assistance in matters related to housing. This includes all spectra of questions related to renting a first home or apartment as well as acquiring the first property. For example, on the very arrival, comers without local recommendations, guarantee letters, or some history of residing in Australia are facing the difficulty of renting their first place. As a result, many settle not where they would like, but where it will turn out, which often goes beyond budgets and expectations.

Discrimination

Frequently mentioned, but probably not as crucial as other concerns, were respondents remarks on various manifestations of discrimination and a sort of dislike on the side of society in different everyday situations towards themselves, relatives, and overall foreigners. This especially concerns immigrants from Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. For instance, Interviewee 12, Russian-speaker of non-European appearance, after many years of living in Australia, "still cannot get used to studying glances of others, silly smirks, sometimes even unflattering remarks said as if about something extraneous but addressed me." It looks like, despite all the efforts of authorities to eradicate the effects of the White Australia Policy, racial and ethnic discrimination are still relevant. This confirms by words of Interviewee 17, who, while analyzing how has the situation changed over the past 20 years noted, that "time passed, the things changed, but being an immigrant, I always feel here like an outsider." Similarly, assesses own experience of living in the country for more than 30 years Interviewee 14:

Before, people who spoke with an accent were called bloody new Australians, and it was suggested that we go home and go back to where we came from; it did not make us feel welcome. Although it is now difficult to imagine a situation where someone on the street would shout right in our faces – "get out," but the negative sentiments towards us are still felt.

Several parents of school-age kids reported some facts of discrimination against youths in schools, where children of immigrants are often mocked, awarded with insulting nicknames, teased, and excluded from communication circles of their peers. Here is how this experience describes in words of Interviewee 12:

The son studied for a month, and then we began to notice that neither the class nor the teacher accepted him. It came to open conflicts when students teased or harassed the child for, for example, that he was the first to do the assignment. Thus, we moved to another school. It seems that such unfriendly behavior is often encountered in schools where most of the students are natives.

Various incidents of discrimination not only result in negative feelings against offenders but also, by acting upon integration outcomes in a cumulative and sophisticated way, affecting migrants' motivations to integrate [20].

DISCUSSION

The results have shown that five factors, namely perceptions towards employment, education, healthcare, government assistance, and discrimination, are preventing Russian-speaking immigrants from smooth and painless integration into the host society. These factors indicate more substantial areas, perceived problems in which, according to respondents, more than others, responsible for the negative feelings of immigrants towards their new homeland, which, in turn, do not support integrational processes. Defining perceptions as an interpretation of reality [48], it is logical to conclude that problems reported by immigrants are not necessarily real, but rather uniquely perceived by this population sample. It is quite possible that geographically separated, filled with different flows of migrants communities, may live very contrasting lives and thus, experience other than reported here problems. Accordingly, their perceptions of what is slowing down assimilation will also vary.

Since, for many, immigration itself was driven by economic motives, it is easy to notice the linkage between the first four reported factors and the fundamental root causes of migration. Identified factors are undoubtedly pushing back immigrants' dreams of economic well-being, thus resulting in negative perceptions. It also explains why the issue of discrimination was sounded the least frequent in plots of respondents and seemed to be not as crucial for immigrants as other factors. In this regard, the current research contradicts findings by other researchers, who, like [13], acknowledge discrimination as "the single most important integration barrier." Despite this divergence, the prevalence of economic factors well aligned with the famous Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which ordains priority of physiological and safety over emotional needs of belonging and love as well as getting their confirmation in recent scholarly on immigrants. For instance, the inability to have credentials (such as education and professional training) recognized and transferred, which eventually also affects the job search, was identified by [7] as the most significant factor, which affects the life of immigrants. Then, both factors, employment, and education, were amongst five other critical barriers to the integration of migrants in the study by [12]. Various problems with employment and verification of education qualification were among the most crucial obstacles to integration in EU funded research of factors influencing integration by [55]. This list could go on and on, confirming that in the sense of findings, this study is consonant with others that exploring similar concerns. Here, the researcher does not re-read the previous remark about the lack of research on immigrants' perceptions towards the host country. The fact is that most of those findings came from the research dedicated to the integration of immigrants into the job market of host countries. The presence of difficulties in areas of employment and education even finding their confirmation in the data of [2], which reports, that only 10% of graduates with humanitarian, social or business degrees manage to find a job in the field on the contrary to about 29% of engineers and IT specialists, 57% of doctors, and 66% of nurses. According to the very same source, these numbers show an almost double increase over what it was 15 years ago, which, in a way, indicates the persistence of the problem. Since this data was collected only from employed individuals of the official job market, the reality is probably gloomier.

Another aspect that needs to be mentioned here in this section is the side effect of problems reported by immigrants. Because of all these life difficulties and in the absence of any support on the side of the state, immigrants are forced to seek help from their kind - the Russian-speaking communities and the diaspora. Here, they could get a prompt where to find the first place to rent, get help with temporary employment (of course, not official), get advice where to find our doctor, nanny for kids, or any other service. Originally conceived as a temporary solution to the problems, over time, it becomes permanent. Unfortunately, the cost of all this is the further removal of the prospects for integrating into the host society. Positive habitual attitudes replaced the first negative perceptions from introduction to the host country, and the need for integration no longer seems necessary. Following Karl Marx's statement that social being determines consciousness, with a degree of certainty, too much immersion in the Russian-speaking environment right here in Australia not only does not facilitate but, on the contrary, slows down the integration and assimilation processes.

Model of Assimilation / Integration of Immigrants (MAI)

Since current research aims to advance, refine and expand a body of knowledge on immigrants, particularly in the area related to their integration into the host society, following the logic of inductive reasoning and postulates of grounded theory, the researcher proposes the behavioral model of assimilation/integration of immigrants, presented in Figure 3. The following premises let to the development of a model. The assimilation/integration of immigrants is nothing but seeking behavior, which, on analogy with many behavioral models is a function of behavioral intentions; the researcher would like to use [23] attitude-behavior relation model to construct further arguments. In relation to the current study, such behavioral intentions on the side of the immigrants would be a desire to become a fully-fledged Australian. Despite the difficulty with assimilation, the behavioral intentions of immigrants, at least in the short run, remain unchanged. The research data suggests that all interviewees were at one or another stage of getting citizenship, and none was willing to give up on it. However, the research data also suggests that regardless presence of positive behavioral intentions towards integration, the seeking behavior is not happening. Thus, there must be other variables that affect the processes of integration independent from behavioral intentions. And here comes to mind, the comprehensive model of adoption by [49], the simplified version of which is shown in Figure 2.

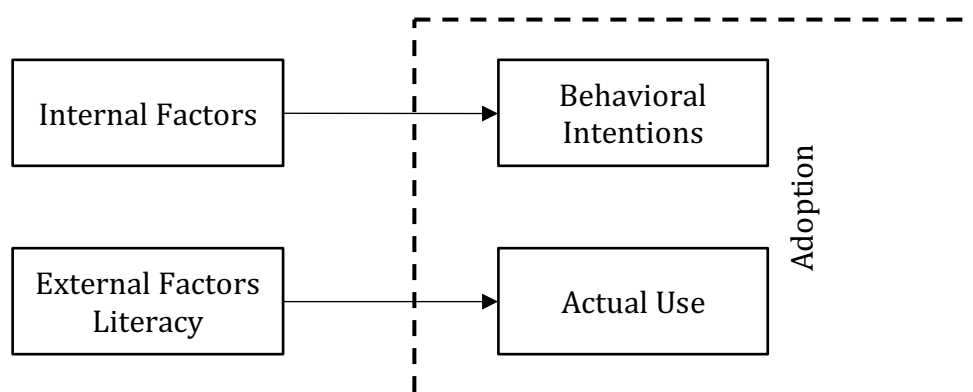


Figure 2. Adopted from Comprehensive Model of Adoption by [49].

In his model, the scholar regards behavior as an interpolation function of two lower-order factors, one of which is behavioral intentions, and another is the factor of actual use. According to

Shovkovyy's interpretation, for the behavior to happen, both lower-order factors must be presents and in their positive sense. Drawing on analogy with Shovkovyy's model, the researcher assumes that for assimilation/integration to happen, there are must be at least two lower-order factors, one of which is undoubtedly behavioral intentions. It seems that this interpretation fits well with the situation observed by the research. So, the task of the researcher narrowed down to finding out what is this second lower-order factor that predetermines whether assimilation happens or not. The findings suggest that there are five factors, via negative perceptions of the immigrants towards them, are slowing international processes. Thus, continue the logic of thinking, the researcher concludes, that immigrants perceptions should represent the seeking lower-order factors of proposed models. As such, the full assimilation/integration in the proposed model is thought to be the result of interpolation of these two variables; for assimilation/integration to occur, both variables must be positive. On analogy with the Shovkovyy model of adoption [49], the role of internal factors in MAI assigned to behavioral intentions and the external factors represented in the model by research findings; these are employment, education, healthcare, government assistance, and discrimination. However, on contrary to Shovkovyy model, these external factors got their reflection on individual perceptions of immigrants only throughout the prism of cumulative experience, which represent the changes which happening over time in that how immigrants perceive unchanged external factors.

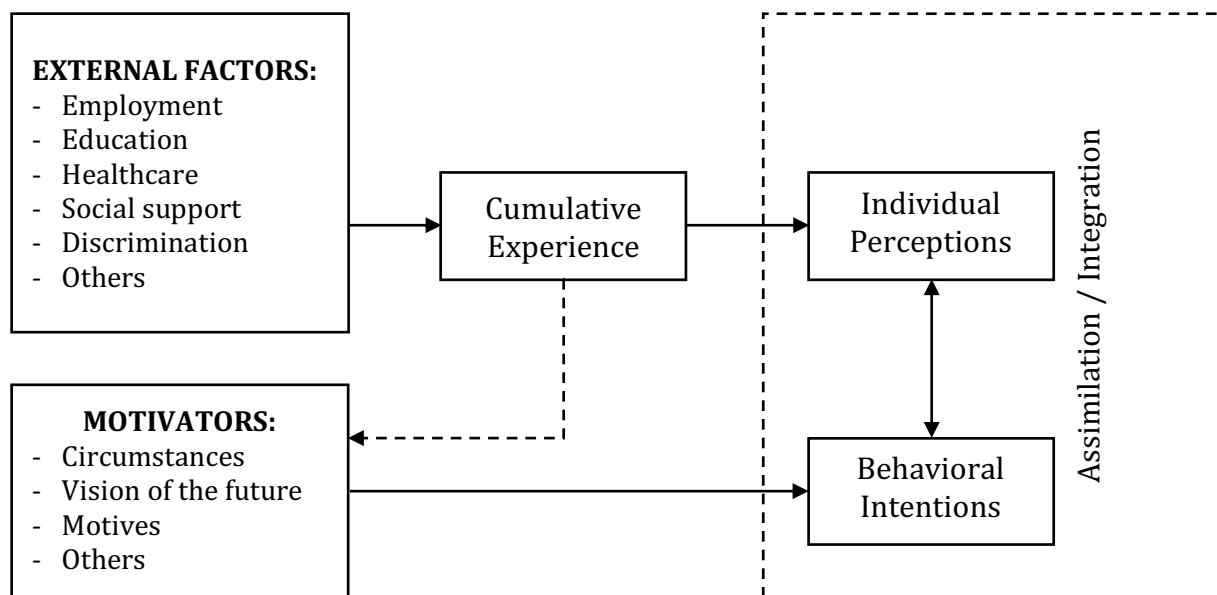


Figure 3. Model of Assimilation/Integration of Immigrants (MAI)

This is how the model works: Individual perceptions of immigrants on the initial stage of immigration are based mostly on theoretical knowledge, conjectures, and hopes to overcome all difficulties of the adventure; thus, fully support integration. However, on arrival, under pressure from accumulating experience, individual perceptions will change. As it confirms by the findings, the change happened in a negative direction. And here is the moment of truth, the negative changes in individual perceptions will negatively affect integration processes, thus, slowing or even hindering it. Here, yet strong behavioral intentions to become a part of a new society on the part of immigrants will be not enough for the full integration if the external factors, perceived through the prism of cumulative experience, is a way different from what was expected. Likewise, no positive experience alone (such as exceptional living conditions) would not lead or result in full integration

if behavioral intentions of immigrants are not directed towards the same. The dashed line, in Figure 3 indicates the initial channel for receiving information about external factors at the very first stage of immigration. Such interpretation could easily explain why immigrants, who were given all kinds of support by the host countries (such as status or social benefits), subsequently commit terrible terrorist attacks or other atrocities against their new compatriots.

The proposed model of assimilation/integration of immigrants not only supplements its predecessors (various behavioral and motivational models) but also significantly improves the accuracy of predicting such complex behavioral variables as integration and assimilation. It easily explains different life situations as well as provides the way for further quantification of levels of assimilation/integration; thus, it opens a pathway to a comparison of those in-between population segments. The model offers a lively approach to assessing assimilation/ integration, which never remains unchanged, but is under the constant influence from its constituent forces.

LIMITATIONS

The findings of this study must be seen in the light of some limitations. Firstly, it is its narrow geographical and population reach, which is predetermined by the study's ethnographic essence and the convenient and opportunistic approach to selecting research settings and the population sample. Then, the settings-bounded nature of findings suggests their applicability to only a small proportion of Russian-speaking immigrants in Australia; thus, it leads to another limitation – it may lack transferability. And lastly, the nature of informal, non-directed interviews with a convenience sample, implies complete dependence on the narrator, which increases the chances of something to be missed or unspoken

Recommendations for the Future Research

The results obtained during the study confirm the viability of the idea to look at integration related issues throughout the eyes of immigrants themselves. Since there is a gap in the body of knowledge on perceptions immigrants, it is not only desirable but vitally necessary to conduct more research of this kind. Such knowledge is opening new possibilities for a better understanding of immigrant lives and the motives of their behavior in the host country; this ultimately will contribute to the formation of a coherent and integrated society. In this regard, the ethnographic methods of gathering data seemed to be the most suitable for this purpose as they not only provide researchers with an abundant amount of raw material but, through the close interactions with subjects, helping to reveal unarticulated needs, identify internal, often hidden factors, which will be challenging to detect by other methods.

Because, the proposed by author model of assimilation and integration of immigrants quite adequately explains the behavior of immigrants in various life situations, it would be advisable to use it in future behavioral studies. This would help not only to improve the model but also to find new areas of its implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

By studying perceptions of immigrants towards the host country, the study aimed at the identification of factors that are hindering processes of integration. The topic is especially relevant in light of multiple incidences of failure of current immigration policies around the world to address the challenges of growing migrant crisis. The research is guided by the idea that immigrants

themselves can prompt the seeking answers pointing out the factors that may go unnoticed by the authorities. Indeed, the assumption turned out to be accurate, and the researcher managed to identify the five factors that affect perceptions of immigrants towards the host country in a negative way: as a result, delaying the onset of integration. Four out of five factors have a clear economic basis, which suggests that from the very beginning, most immigrants in a lose-lose or disadvantageous situation with respect to the locals. From here, it becomes clear that integration would not be possible until these disadvantages were resolved. As for the fifth factor-discrimination, its significance will be decreasing proportionally to the speed of correction of the imbalance with the first four.

Considering, that the surge in international migrations is improbable to diminish, the authorities should either toughen the current immigration policies or, take the lead and play a more proactive and responsible role while dealing with immigrant-related issues. The author suggests that among such first-priority measures could be: 1) increased assistance and support to all immigrants; 2) closer attention and more proactive approach to management and organization of lives of immigrant communities.

References

- Asli, Y., Evaluation of ethnic identity perceptions of Turkish origin immigrants living in Germany in terms of social psychological terms. *Elm və İnnovativ Texnologiyalar [Science and Innovative Technologies]*, 2019. 8: 40-51. Retrived from <https://doi.org/10.5782/2616-4418.8.2019.40>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimated resident population, country of birth, age and sex - as at 30 June 1996 to 2019 Profile, 2019.. ABS. Retrived from http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ERP_COB.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Household income and wealth, Australia, 2017-18, 2019. ABS. Retrived from [https://www.abs.gov.au/household-income\(2019, July 12\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/household-income(2019, July 12)).
- Babbie, E. R., *The practise of social research*. 11th edition ed2007. Thomson Wadsworth: CA, USA.
- Babraj, A., Experience with and perceptions of immigrants in Italy, 2019. *Proceedings, 2019 (2) Claremont-UC Undergraduate Research Conference on the European Union*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.5642/urceu.201901.02>.
- Bardakci, S. Ibrahim Sirkeci interview: "Bu göçün artıları olabilir [This migration may have its pluses]" 2015 *Al Jazeera Turkish*. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/bu-gocun-artilari-olabilir>.
- Barker, C., Barriers to employment and overcoming economic integration challenges for foreign-born workers in Maine, 2018. Honors thesis, The University of Maine: Maine, Germany. Retrived from <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/honors/315>
- Blinder, S. and A. M. Jeannet, The 'illegal' and the skilled: effects of media portrayals on perceptions of immigrants in Britain. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, 2018. 44(9): 1444-1462.
- Brown, S. K. and F. D. Bean, Assimilation models, old and new: Explaining a long-term process, 2006. MPI. Retrived from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/assimilation-models-old-and-new-explaining-long-term-process>.
- Chan, H. C., and S. Siddique, *Singapore's multiculturalism: Evolving diversity*, 2019. Routledge: UK.
- Charis, E. K., et al., *Punishing immigrants: Policy, politics, and injustice*, 2012. New York University Press.
- Coppari, P. R., Five key barriers for migrants in Ireland, 2016. European Commission. Retrived from <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/5-key-barriers-migrants-ireland>.
- Constant, A. F., et al., *Attitudes towards immigrants, other integration barriers, and their veracity*, 2008. Deutsches Institut (DIW): Berlin, Germany.

- Crawley, H., et al., Victims and villains: Migrant voices in the british media, 2016. Statewatch. Retrived from <http://statewatch.org/news/2016/feb/uk-victims-villains-migrant-voices-british-media-2-16.pdf>.
- Creswell, J. W., Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach. 3rd edition ed2009. Sage Publications: NY, USA.
- Creswell, J. W., and V. L. Plano Clark, The mixed methods reader, 2008. Sage Publications: NY, USA.
- Crossman, A., What is ethnography? 2019. ThoughtCo. Retrived from <https://www.thoughtco.com/ethnography-definition-3026313>.
- Denzin, N. K., Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century, 1996. SAGE Publications: NY, USA.
- DeSimone, R. L., and J. M. Werner, Human resource development, 2012., Cengage Learning: CA, USA.
- Diehl, C., and E. Liebau, Perceptions of discrimination: What do they measure and why do they matter? 2017. Deutsches Institut (DIW): Berlin, Germany.
- Eiser, J. R., Attribution theory and the health belief model, 1983. Blackwell: NJ, USA.
- Fassinger, R. E., Paradigms, praxis, problems, and promise: Grounded theory in counseling psychology research. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 2005. 2(2): 156–166.
- Fishbein, M., and I. Ajzen, Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: an introduction to theory and research, 1975. Addison-Wesley Publishing: Boston, USA.
- Franko, K., and M. Bosworth, The borders of punishment: Migration, citizenship and social exclusion, 2013. University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Giordano, J., et al., Confidentiality and autonomy: the challenge(s) of offering research participants a choice of disclosing their identity. Qualitative Health Research, 2007. 17(2): 264-275.
- Goodson, L., and M. Vassar, An overview of ethnography in healthcare and medical education research. Journal of Educational Evaluation for Health Professions, 2011. 8(4), 4.
- Gorgun, B. A., Through the Syrian refuge in Turkey towards the creations of the war migration theory, 2019. IGI Global.
- Gray, D. E., Doing research in the real world. 3rd edition ed2011. Sage Publications: NY, USA.
- Hammersley, A., and P. Atkinson, Ethnography. Principles in practice. 3rd edition ed2007. Routledge: London, UK.
- Hayes, N., Principles of social psychology, 1993. Erlbaum: NJ, USA.
- Hendriks, M., and M. J. Burger, Unsuccessful subjective well-being assimilation among immigrants: The role of raltering rerceptions of the rost rociety. Journal of Happiness Studies, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00164-0>
- Holliday, A., Doing and writing qualitative research. 3rd edition ed2016. Sage Publications: NY, USA.
- Huby, G., et al., Contributions of ethnography to the study of public services management. Public Management Review, 2011. 13: 209-225.
- Ionescu, I. and L. Luchian, Economic implications of the new migration wave in Europe. Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series, 2016. 25(1): 36-45.
- Kapoor, D., et al., Indian diaspora philanthropy. In: P.Geithner, P.Johnson & L. Chen (eds) Diaspora philanthropy and equitable development in China and India, 2004. University Press: Cambridge, USA.
- Lamanna, F., et al., Immigrant community integration in world cities. PLoS ONE, 2018. 13(3): e0191612.
- Lu, Y., et al., Skilled migration, expectation and reality, 2015. Routledge: London, UK.
- Martijn, A. C., et al., Negativity and positivity effects in person perception and inference: Ability versus morality. European Journal of Social Psychology, 1992. 22: 453-463.

- Massey, D. S., A missing element in migration theories. *Migration Letters*, 2015. 12(3): 279-299.
- Mauch, J. E. and N. Park, Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: A handbook for students and faculty. 5th edition ed2003. CRC Press: Ohio, USA.
- Mol, H., Identity and the sacred: A sketch for a new social-scientific theory of religion, 1976. Blackwell: Oxford, UK.
- Morawska, E., Multicultural modes of immigrants' integration into the host society: exploring the proposition. *Sociology and Anthropology*, 2018. 6(10): 764-774.
- Pope, C. and N. Mays, Qualitative research: Reaching the parts other methods cannot reach: an introduction to qualitative methods in health and health services research. *BMJ*, 1995. 311(6996): 42-45.
- Pelto, P. J., Applied ethnography: Guidelines for field research, 2016. Routledge: London, UK.
- Porumbescu, A., Defining the new economics of labor migration theory boundaries: a sociological-level analysis of international migration. *Revista de Stiinte Politice [Journal of Political Science]*, 2015. 45: 55-64.
- Raposo I.G., Immigration: The doors of perception. Bruegel, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.bruegel.org/2018/12/immigration-the-doors-of-perception>.
- Scanlon Foundation Research Institute Australian population trends. Scanloninstitute, 2019. Retrieved from <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/migrationdashboard>
- Schacter, D. L., et al., Psychology. 2nd edition ed2011. Worth Publishers: NY, USA.
- Shovkovyy, O., Adoption of e-Government services in Ukraine. *Thai Journal of Public Administration*, 2015. 13(2): 206-219.
- Shovkovyy, O., Bogged down in the past. *People: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 2018. 4(3): 1927-1938.
- Sieber, J. E., Planning ethically responsible research: a guide for students and internal review boards, 1992. Sage Publications: NY, USA.
- Spradley, J. P. V., Participant observation. 6th edition ed2016. Sage Publications:NY, USA.
- Teddlie, C. and A. Tashakkori, Foundations of mixed methods research: integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences, 2009. Sage Publications:NY, USA.
- Tolich, M., Internal confidentiality: When confidentiality assurances fail relational informants. *Qualitative Sociology*, 2004. 27(1): 101-106.
- UNHCR, Facilitators and barriers refugee integration in Austria. Refugee Integration Agency, 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5278dc644.pdf>
- Van Dijk, T. A., Structures and strategies of discourse and prejudice. In: Van Oudenhoven, J. P. and T. M. Willemsen (eds.) *Ethnic minoroties*, 1989. Swets and Zeitlinger Leiden:Netherlands.
- Walsh, I., et al., What grounded theory is ...A critically reflective conversation among scholars. *Organizational Research Methods*, 2015. 18(4): 581-599.
- Wiles, R., et al., The management of confidentiality and anonymity in social research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 2008. 11(5): 417-428.
- Zander, V., Identity and marginality among new Australians: Religion and ethnicity in Victoria's slavic baptist community, 2004. De Gruyter: Belin, Germany.
- Zibenberg, A., The characteristics of effective leadership: Perceptions among immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Israel. *Organization Management Journal*, 2018. 15(2): 45-57.