Generations and Motivations:
Russian and other former Soviet immigrants in Costa Rica

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Introduction

This paper examines the role that social networks have played in the migration and settlement of Russian and other former Soviet immigrants to Costa Rica. This group of immigrants is particular in that it is an example of migration from a former communist nation to a third world country, not an industrialized one. Furthermore, a group of Soviet women who married Costa Rican men beginning in the late 1970's set the migration flow in motion. The objective of our research was to examine the structure and meaning of these immigrants' social networks, and the role that they play in the migration process and during settlement. The findings suggest that there is a significant difference in the form and function of the social networks of those immigrants who arrived prior to 1991 (during the Soviet era), and those who came in 1991 and later. The period of arrival, therefore, becomes more important in defining their social networks than a common background and a shared cultural identity.

Theoretical Background

A review of research on international migration shows two main emphasis: those theories that attempt to explain why people migrate, and those focusing on the period of settlement and assimilation. Researchers have linked social networks to both these processes.

Academics who offer explanations as to why people migrate often disagree, among other things, over the level of analysis appropriate for studying international migration (Massey:1990). The theories can be divided, therefore, into those that explain the onset of international migration in a micro theoretical framework, and those that view it as part of a larger socioeconomic and political structure.

Neoclassical economics offers one such micro level theory of international migration. According to this model, individual rational actors base their decision to migrate on a cost-benefit calculation (Todaro:1969). The calculation factors in the probability of avoiding deportation, the probability of employment at destination, the earnings at destination, and subtracts the probabilities of employment at community of origin, earnings if employed at community of origin, and the costs of movements. If the expected net return is positive, then the migrant decides to move (Massey:1993).

Lee (1966) emphasized push-pull factors in sending and receiving areas as factors contributing to the migration decision. "Push" factors include a declining economy, unemployment, or war. "Pull" factors that attract immigrants to a region include a strong economy and the widespread availability of jobs.

An alternative theory stresses the choice processes in migration behavior. Besides the expectation of positive outcomes resulting from migration, two other preconditions exist: that the migration choice be cognitively and physically available to individuals, and that they possess sufficient resources (capital, information, networks) to implement the move (De Jong:1999). In this theory, values and goals become important, for migration is a channel to fulfill those goals.

Other scholars argue that the level at which the decisions are made is the family or household. Households look to diversify their sources of income to reduce risk, and migration is one such strategy. Particularly, households look to improve not only their net income, but also their income relative to other households. Changes in the income of another household, therefore, can trigger migration to ward off the "relative deprivation" (Massey:1993).

While all the aforementioned theories focus on decision-making (whether at an individual or household level), they do not necessarily contradict macro theories that emphasize structural circumstances (at the national or global level). Rather, we can conceptualize migration as decisions made within and in response to contextual factors often beyond the control of the migrants.

Neoclassical economics macro theory places the cause of international migration on geographical differences in the demand and supply of labor. Dual labor market theory further stresses that a bifurcation of the labor market in industrialized nations into highly skilled versus non-skilled jobs originates international migration as the native born move up the job hierarchy and employers look to foreign workers who will accept the lowest-paying jobs. Finally, world systems theory views international migration as a natural consequence of the expansion of capitalism. As societies industrialize, people become less attached to land and more mobile- mobilization that is facilitated through highly effective transportation and communication, the same channels that mobilize goods and capital (Massey:1993). Transnational models account for those immigrants who retain strong ties to their home countries, and are embedded in the society there. Who exactly is considered a transnational migrant, and just how and to what extent they must be involved in their community of origin to be considered so, however, is often contested (Kasinitiz, et al:2002).

Macro theories are effective in explaining large influxes of unskilled migrants into industrialized countries. There are many other alternate patterns of migration, however, besides north-south migration. Although migration between third world countries might also be a natural consequence of the global expansion of capitalism, it

has little or nothing to do with a bifurcated labor market or the need for cheap labor. Further research is needed to understand what triggers these other flows. In the case of Russians in Costa Rica, women who married Costa Rican studying in the Soviet Union set off the flow. The decision to migrate responded not to a calculation of expected benefits, but to a structural factor: the scholarships granted by the Soviet government demanded that the students return home upon the completion of the studies.

Social networks play an important role in the decision to migrate. Massey (1993:448) defines migrant social networks as "[…] sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through the ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin". These networks lower the costs and risks of migrating, therefore increasing the expected net returns from moving. The social context in both the sending and receiving community is altered through migration, usually increasing the likelihood of more migration. This process, termed cumulative causation, eventually leads to self-sustained migration (Massey:1990). When migration flows become extremely large, institutions arise that facilitate the process, particularly for those who wish to enter a country but cannot legally do so. They provide services such as smuggling across borders, fake documents, arranged marriages, etc. (Massey:1993).

Social capital becomes essential during the settlement process of an immigrant. These connections are not limited to other immigrants, but often they begin as such. Social capital is a source of wealth in that it gives privileged access to information (Portes:1998). For migrants, having a network ameliorates the impact of the migration, for it can provide them with jobs, housing, and material and emotional support. Implicitly agreed in these networks is the idea of reciprocity: members of a network are expected to

also be available when someone else needs them. Menjívar (2000) showed in her study of El Salvadoran immigrants the negative consequences of these networks. People with limited resources may become overly indebted and unable to reciprocate.

Networks do not always have the same effect on men and women. Hagan (1998) found that Mayan immigrants in Houston benefited more from social networks than their female counterparts. Because they were mostly hired as housekeepers, the women had limited opportunities to meet other people, while the men came in contact with outsiders more. The men's networks also increased given the expansion of their workplaces.

The benefits of social networks are clear, and given that members comply with the implicit rules (such as reciprocating), it is assumed that having a common background is a basis for the formation of a network. Newcomers in particular, can relate to compatriots or coethnics more easily than to members of the host society, particularly if they speak a different language.

Given these numerous theories, we expect Russian migration to follow a cumulative causation: that each new immigrant entering Costa Rica relies on those that have settled to facilitate their own settlement in Costa Rica. We intend to show, however, that in the case of Russians in Costa Rica, having different values and motivations for migrating has downplayed the importance of compatriots in the formation of social networks.

Costa Rica and immigration

Costa Rica has a long history of immigration. Large populations of West Indians and Chinese arrived since the late nineteenth century, as well as Lebanese, among others. Strategically situated in Central America, the country has had no army since 1949. Not

having suffered the armed conflict that its neighbors did during the 1980s, it has earned a worldwide reputation for being peaceful. Furthermore, its relative economic stability, and superior levels of education and health care, have made it an attractive place for many immigrants, including Argentineans, Chileans in the 1970s, and Nicaraguans and Salvadorans in the 1980s. Recently, large numbers of Colombians and Taiwanese have entered the country, and the migrant flows have become increasingly diverse. According to the 2000 Census, the total Costa Rican foreign-born population for 2000 was 296,461 (7.78% of total population). Currently, the largest immigrant groups are Nicaraguans, who constitute 5.94% of the total population. The next four largest groups are Panamanians, Americans, Salvadorans, and Colombians (see table 1).

Table 1: Largest immigrant groups by country of birth

Country of birth	Number	% of total migrant population
Nicaragua	226374	76.36
Panama	10270	3.46
United States	9511	3.20
El Salvador	8714	2.93
Colombia	5898	2.00
Total	**296461**	**100.00**

Source: INEC, 2000 Census.

Costa Rica is sometimes used as a "bridge" to gain entrance to the United States. Once an immigrant attains Costa Rican residence or citizenship, it is easier to obtain legal entrance to the United States. This is common among Cubans, as many baseball players have sought refugee status to become free agents in the U.S. instead of being drafted. The most famed case is that of New York Yankees pitcher Orlando "El Duque" Hernandez (La Nacion: 1/3/2000). Hernandez was granted refugee status and

soon migrated to the U.S. His case made news headlines as many Costa Ricans complained that once famous, he would "forget about Costa Rica".

The influx of Soviet migrants began in the late 1970's and remained steady during the 1980's. Most of these immigrants were spouses of Costa Rican students who obtained advanced degrees in the Soviet Union. Their studies were funded by scholarships from the Soviet government, and they required that the students return home upon completion of their degrees. The 2000 Costa Rican Census claims that currently there are just over 600 immigrants born in Russia or one of the other former Soviet republics. Records kept by the Migration Office (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería) indicate a steady increase of Russians entering the country. While these data includes entries with all visas, it is not unlikely that many of the "tourists" end up staying, as some informants claimed that is what they did.

Methods

The data come from fieldwork conducted by the first author between June and August of 2003. During that time, she carried out an ethnosurvey to collect basic demographic markers, data on socioeconomic status, migration and labor history, and indicators of assimilation (such as language use and participation in social organizations). An ethnosurvey allows the collection of life history data, and is particularly useful in documenting the circularity of much of the current international migration (Massey:1987).

The respondents were found using a modified snowball sampling technique, where several individuals acted as the index. While this may not be the most appropriate

technique for obtaining a varied sample of the Russian population, snowball sampling was necessary for this is not a highly visible population.

Once interviewed, an informant was asked to give the names and phone numbers or addresses of other Russian immigrants they knew. This technique proved very successful, and she received many phone numbers, always with an extra comment such as “he is very nice, he’ll talk a lot”, or “don’t tell her that it was me who gave you her number”. Informants were more reluctant to give me the phone numbers of the more recent immigrants, claiming that their Spanish skills were not good and would probably not want to be interviewed. This, in addition to the fact that the older generation all knew each other but the newcomers were more isolated, made it hard to find more recently arrived informants. A lot of them were found by chance, meeting them in a Russian restaurant or through Costa Rican informants who told me about a Russian store they saw, or a Russian neighbor they have. Once contacted, informants were usually willing to participate. The only two rejections received were from a woman who was leaving the country soon, and another one who was pregnant and due to give birth anytime.

Besides answering the structured survey questions, informants often provided more information than was asked of them, such as their opinion of Costa Rican society, the reception they obtained from their husband’s families or society in general, etc. These comments were written in the survey form and considered in the analysis.

The survey includes a total of 23 household heads. The ethnosurvey also requested information about the other members of the household (defined as children living outside the home, or anyone living in it), and any other relative living in Costa Rica (including partner’s relatives, whether Russian or Costa Rican). In total, we

obtained information on 60 immigrants, constituting approximately 10% of the total reported Russian population in Costa Rica (see table 2).

Table 2: Sample size and representation

Country of birth	Number in CR	Households Surveyed	No. of people represented
Armenia	5	0	0
Azerbaijan	2	0	0
Bielorussia	4	1	5
Georgia	9	0	0
Kazakstan	4	1	1
Lithuania	7	0	0
Moldova	3	0	0
Russia	450	14	29
Ukraine	117	4	17
Uzbekistan	1	3	8
Total	**602**	**23**	**60**

The number of reported immigrants in the 2000 Census from each of the republics does not match precisely the data gathered through the ethnosurvey. Particularly, the Census reports one person born in Uzbekistan, while we interviewed three different Uzbek households with a total of eight members, all of whom were in Costa Rica prior to the Census. One possible explanation for this is that immigrants from the lesser-known republics reported themselves as "Russians"- this is particularly likely due to the way in which the Costa Rican Census is carried out. Personnel (usually local teachers) conduct the Census house to house, and if a reply of "Uzbekistan" is met by a perplexed look, an informant might simply claim to be Russian. Another explanation might be that there is an underreporting of Russian immigrants due to illegal status, but this has not yet been explored.

Data

The sample consists of 7 men and 16 women, with ages ranging from 17 to 62. Their educational level is very high, with 82.6% of them having at least a college education. Most of those interviewed are Russian-born, a total of 14, and the rest are from Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Byelorussia (4, 3, 1 and 1, respectively).

The informants have been in Costa Rica anywhere between 1 and 31 years in the country. Because of this wide range of years since they migrated, we divided the respondents into two groups: those who arrived prior to 1991, and those who arrived in 1991 or later. While being interviewed, many referred to "the old ones" or "the new ones" when talking about the Russian community in Costa Rica. This occurred when informants were asked to give referrals to other possible respondents ("I don't know too many of the new ones"), when they discussed the cohesion of the community ("the old ones are too old-fashioned"), etc. Once separated into the two groups, many differences become evident, which are unrelated to educational level, age or gender, but instead have to do with the immigrant's period of arrival. Fifteen households fell into the "pre-1991" category (2 men and 13 women) and 8 in the "1991 and later" group (5 men and 3 women).

The basic sociodemographic characteristics do not vary much by group. The pre-1991 generation has a higher rate of divorce (42.9% versus 33%), for which the informants had varying explanations. All of the pre-1991 women sampled were married to Costa Rican men. Several of them mentioned cultural differences as the reason for the high divorce rate. Among the explanations given were that Costa Rican men are "womanizers" and that they cheated on them, or that they had alcoholic husbands.

Someone mentioned that Russian women are "difficult" and that Costa Rican men are "mansos" (docile). One of the Russian women who is still married to a Costa Rican argued that those that got divorced make generalizations about Costa Ricans, and that they believe in the superiority of Russian culture. What became clear is that none of the divorced women regretted it, they all claimed to be happy that they did it- one even said that although she is divorced, she likes to think of her ex-husband as being dead. Besides the higher divorce rate among the pre-1991 group, other sociodemographic characteristics are uniform across both groups, with educational levels being high (a mean of 16.13 and 14.75) and no major religious affiliations ((see table 3). The major differences evident between the pre-1991 group and the post-1991 group are with respect to their migration experience and employment characteristics, which are closely related to their social networks.

Table 3: Sociodemographic characteristics by group

	Pre-1991	**1991+**
Educational Level	16 years	14.75 years
Marital status (divorced)	43%	33%
Religious affiliation	none	none
Employment (professionals)	80%	37.5%

Almost all (93.3%) of the pre-1991 informants migrated to Costa Rica because they had married Costa Ricans who had scholarships to study in the Soviet Union. Most of them expressed the desire to remain the Soviet Union, but the conditions of the scholarship demanded that the students return to their country of origin. Some of the female respondents were adamant about making it clear that they married for love- they all mention only one case of a Russian woman who married a Costa Rican student because she wanted to exit the Soviet Union. The post-1991 group gave mixed reasons

for deciding to move, including one informant who claimed to have seen a tourism advertisement on TV, and decided to move there. Others mentioned problems in owning businesses in Russia given the influence of the mafia. Most of them, however, claimed they migrated for economic reasons. None were married to a Costa Rican at the time of migration.

Just over 13% of the pre-1991 informants had a relative migrate to Costa Rica after them, usually a parent. None of them, however, had any previous relatives there prior to moving, save for their spouse's families. Of the new generation, 37.5% had family members in Costa Rica. Many of the ones that chose Costa Rica not because they had family there, mentioned that they wanted to move to the U.S. but that it was too difficult to obtain a visa, so they chose Costa Rica instead given its reputation as a peaceful country. Although none mentioned that they wished to move to the U.S. after obtaining Costa Rican citizenship, some did mention relatives who were in Costa Rica and now in the U.S., which is consistent with the phenomenon of Costa Rica as a bridge.

Because they came with Costa Rican husbands, the earlier generation of immigrants arrived under very particular settings. Their entire initial support base consisted of their husband's Costa Rican families. Because of this, 93.3% stated that they stayed with "relatives" during their initial time in Costa Rica. By contrast, only 25% of the new generation made that claim, another 25% stayed with friends, and half of them rented.

The average age at migration for the earlier generation was 27.27 years. They came with young, recently-formed families which posed a challenge in itself. In fact, two thirds of them already had at least one child when they arrived in Costa Rica. For the

newer generation, the average age at migration is 35.17 years. Because they were older at the time of arrival, and not fresh out of college, many of the immigrants came to Costa Rica with more financial capital than their pre-1991 counterparts. Only 37.5% had children with them when they arrived- 25% of them are men who were divorced and migrated without their children. Migration characteristics are summarized in table 4.

Table 4: Migration characteristics by group

	Pre-1991	**1991+**
Reasons for migrating	marriage	Mixed- economic
Social networks	Didn't have any- 13% brought later	37.5% had them
Age at migration	27.3	35.2

Once in the country, all the immigrants had to start by learning the language- only two of those surveyed reported being fluent in Spanish upon migration. Second was finding employment, and here too, there are big differences between both groups. The pre-1991 generation arrived as Soviets to a capitalist country. Many informants alluded to the reception that they found in Costa Rican society: fear of communism, particularly given the ongoing civil wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador. All the informants spoke of hard times, because their husband's degrees lacked recognition at the beginning. The vast majority (92.9%) of these immigrants said they found a job "on their own", either looking for it or starting their own business. Only 7.1% said that someone recommended them for a job. One informant explained the situation she and her husband faced:

> "My husband had illusions about returning to his country, Costa Rica. He was offered a job at a (state farm) but he rejected it, he said he wanted to come back and be useful here. But we found that there was a lot of fear, nobody wanted to hire him because they thought we were revolutionaries, and there was a lot of fear because of what was going on in Nicaragua. So we went through some very difficult times. I did what I could, and

> the family was helpful, sometimes they would buy (the daughter) clothes so we had something to give her for Christmas. But it was very hard. Until the government finally realized that these people were very educated and useful, and slowly they started hiring them. Now many have very good jobs."

This shows that although all of these immigrants had some sort of social network upon arrival, comprised of their spouse's Costa Rican relatives, this network did not prove itself useful in job searching. Possible reasons for this are that their relatives knew of no jobs given the hard economic times the country was going through, particularly during the 1980's.

Of the newer generation, however, 50% reported being recommended for a job or having been hired by a Russian, and only 37.5% found a job on their own or started their own business. Business ownership, in fact, is an important factor in defining differences between the older and newer generations. Although 80% of the pre-1991 immigrants now hold professional occupations (with over half of them being actual teachers or professors), 53.3% of them reported being self-employed at some point since migrating. Of the newer generation, 37.5% of them hold professional jobs, and only 25% reported being self-employment either currently or at some point after arrival in Costa Rica. Most of the jobs that the self-employed earlier migrants reported, however, were individual, such as doing translations or teaching private Russian lessons. The newer migrants, however, involved themselves more in business ownership- opening a restaurant or small stores. This kind of business requires employees, and that is where newer migrants often found jobs. Table 5 summarizes the characteristics of the settlement process.

Table 5: Settlement characteristics by group

	Pre-1991	1991+
Housing	93% with family	25% with family 50% rented
Language	Didn't speak Spanish	Didn't speak Spanish
How they found jobs	93% on their own	50% on their own 37.5% recommended

Finally, several measures of assimilation also vary by generation. As expected, Spanish language use is more extensive in the older generation- half of them claimed to use both Spanish and Russian at home, and 35.7% said they use exclusively Russian. Among the newer group, however, only 7.1% use both languages, with 87.5% relying exclusively on Russian.

We asked informants whether their children attended a public or private school in Costa Rica. This is a good indicator of economic status since private schools tend to be expensive and only upper middle class people can afford them. Furthermore, those who can afford to pay for a private education for their children usually do, since the educational quality is well above the vast majority of Costa Rica's public schools. I found that of those who had children, all (100%) of the newer generation placed them in public schools, while 64.29% of the older generations placed their children in a private school at some point in their education. This indicates a higher socioeconomic status for the older generation. The newer generation arrives with more capital, true, but this is often invested in business and homeownership, and therefore little is left for children's education.

Given the deteriorating Russian economy, it is no surprise that almost half of the older generation households send remittances to relatives in their country of origin. Some people mentioned giving their relatives a credit card that they in turn pay for in Costa

Rica as an alternative to wiring remittances, which can be expensive. Of the newer generation, 37.5% of immigrants send remittances, and 25% of them receive remittances from family members in their country of origin.

When asked about their friendships, informants had different reactions. The question "where are your close friends from" received the response "Russian" from 76.9% of the pre-1991 generation. Just over 15% of them claimed they had both Russian and Costa Rican friends, and less than 8% claimed to have exclusively Costa Rican friends. Only half of the newer generation, however, answered the question. We encountered remarks such as "who can you really trust" or "how does one know who the real friends are". Of those that did provide an answer, 50% said their close friends were Russian, and a third of them they were exclusively Costa Rican. Furthermore, when asked for references on additional potential informants (given the snowball sampling technique), most pre-1991 respondents gave me numerous names, which quickly became repetitive. One informant gave references to several recent migrants whom she has met due to the nature of her job. Older migrants, however, admitted to having little information about newer immigrants (see table 6).

Table 6: Assimilation characteristics by group

	Pre-1991	**1991+**
Language at home	50% mixed	87.5% Russian 7.1% mixed
Children in schools	64% private	100% public
Remittances	Half of them send	37.5% sends 25% receives
Friends	77% Russian 15% mixed	50% Russian 30% Costa Rican

Discussion

Given the previous data, we found that the period of arrival of Russian immigrants in Costa Rica coincides with the values that they brought along with them, and the reasons why they migrated in the first place.

We expect pioneer migrants, having no social ties to the host country, to face difficult times in settling and adjusting to their new society. This was true for many of the pre-1991 immigrants, who despite having Costa Rican husbands (and their husband's families as a social network) had great difficulty in obtaining jobs and had high levels of self-employment. Not only did the husband's family not prove useful in helping them to find a job, but also other Russian women could not either, for they were in the same situation. As one informant explained,

> "The other (Russian) women couldn't really help me out because they were in the same boat. They were also trying to find a job and make ends meet. But they did offer… how can I say it… moral support. We knew that we were all going through the same thing".

Culture shock became a big obstacle to overcome, something mentioned by immigrants from both groups. In the case of the pre-1991 women, many attributed their high divorce rate to this. In spite of being divorced and not altogether adapted to Costa Rican society, none of our informants mentioned a divorced Russian woman returning home.

> "By the time I got divorced, I had my children, and they are Costa Rican. Besides, we knew what was happening (in Russia) and we didn't want to go back, the economy was going to collapse and we had our job and our life here. But many wish they could go back."

Social network theory posits that having compatriots in the receiving country encourages further migration because it lowers the perceived costs of migrating. Furthermore, they should make settlement into the new society easier. We found that less than 40% of the post 1991 group migrated to Costa Rica because they had family

members or friends there. Instead, some chose Costa Rica because they believed it was easy to gain entrance there, such as this Uzbek woman:

> "Originally, I wanted to go to the U.S., but it is very hard to get a visa there. So we came to Costa Rica, now I have refugee status. I never thought I would stay in Costa Rica. The hardest thing is to find a job at my age. In Costa Rica it doesn't matter if you are a foreigner or a national, there is discrimination by age. [Employers] want people under 35".

Others mentioned business opportunities, and even adventure. What is certain is that the vast majority of the newer immigrants are leaving their countries given the economic and political (one informant mentioned the Chechnyan war) difficulties they face, and arrive in Costa Rica not through social channels.

Once in the Costa Rica, however, the existing community of compatriots does not always ameliorate settlement. Our data shows that half of the new immigrants started their own business. Some of them hired other recent arrivals. Only one of the newer immigrants interviewed worked for someone from the first group. The newer generation also incurs in rental costs: half of them rented houses upon arrival while almost all the older immigrants stayed with their husband's families.

Many immigrants from both the pre and post 1991 groups voiced the idea of not staying. One mentioned the case of a Russian artist whose art was "not appreciated by the Costa Rican public" and decided to go back. Even for those in the country a long time, Russia often seems more like home. Two informants who arrived in the late 1980's explained:

> "I can't believe I've been here so long. I always feel like this is temporary, like I'll go back one of these days, but I've been saying it for over a decade now".

> "It's the seasons. In Costa Rica there are no seasons, so the weather is always the same. That is why time goes by so fast. In Russia, you went through spring, summer, autumn and winter and you knew that was a year. But here, the weather is the same and before you know it, time went by."

Friendship networks are also different for the two groups. Over three-fourths of the pre 1991 immigrants have close friendship ties with other Russians, all of them also from the earlier group. Half of the newer immigrants reported close friendships with compatriots, all of them from the post 1991 group also. In other words, when Russian immigrants have close friendships with other Russian immigrants, it is with those who arrived in their period, pre or post 1991. The newer immigrants reported higher levels of close ties with Costa Ricans, suggesting greater propensity to assimilation. The fact that these newer immigrants did not encounter the hostilities that their compatriots did when they arrived as Soviets might explain their higher rates of close ties with Costa Ricans.

In summary, with a few exceptions, the Russian immigrants in Costa Rica operate in networks that are for the most part limited to other Russians arriving in the same period as them. Both groups are well aware of the existence of the others, but their contact rarely goes beyond a short-term formal relationship. For instance, one pre 1991 informant hired a recent arrival to paint her house; a post 1991 immigrant needed a legal document and she chose a Russian lawyer for it. The question remains, then, why do these immigrants not form close ties with other compatriots who arrived in a different period. Our data shows that the differences are not related to age or educational level. The data does suggest, however, that immigrants from each period of arrival hold different values that cause distrust between them. De Jong's (1999) emphasis on immigrants' values prior to migration is relevant in this case. Russian migration to Costa Rica shows that people from similar backgrounds who hold different values and goals might choose migration to the same place as a way to fulfill those goals. Once in the host society, however, the fact that the values are different overrides the unity that one would

expect from people who find themselves with something in common: they are Russian immigrants.

The immigrants themselves attest to this. We have endless examples of immigrants from both the pre and post 1991 group making reference to "the others" and their distrust of them. Here we include a few:

> "I don't understand the immigrants who come on their own to start a business, because [in Costa Rica] there isn't a need for professionals. All the markets are saturated".
>
> "The problem with the old [immigrants] is that they are stuck with the old values, you can't even talk to them".
>
> "I know they are there [the recent immigrants], but I don't really try to find them, we are very different. They come here wanting to start a business, they want to be rich. Can you believe some of them already come with money?"
>
> "I don't mix with the new Russians because they come with another mentality. There is this couple, they came with money and are building a fancy house. The old Russians, you know already, you know who is who. But the new ones you don't know them, I feel like a stranger in the new Russia".
>
> "I don't talk to the old Russians. I just don't".

This distrust of each other and of their values keeps the Russian immigrants from each group largely separated from each other. For the older generation, Russians from their period of arrival meant friends. They were pioneers like them who struggled to make a living, but they were also people with similar values and life histories who they could rely on. The new immigrants are strangers, Russians with very different values who want to own businesses and make profit. Costa Ricans are those that made them feel unwelcome when they first arrived, but some of whom have become friends.

For the newer generation, the older Russian immigrants have "the old values" and they are not very interested in establishing close social ties with them. Other recent immigrants sometimes provide friendships, and those who own businesses provide

employment opportunities. Costa Ricans did not fear them for being Soviets, and they provide friendships too.

Conclusions

In this paper, we tested social network theory to see if it applies to the case of Russian immigrants in Costa Rica. We divided the informants into two groups, pre or post 1991, according to their year of arrival. We expected the newer immigrants to have migrated to Costa Rica following networks. Also, we thought that having a large group of settled compatriots would play a key role in the settlement process of the more recent immigrants. We found however, that the reasons for migrating to Costa Rica are important in defining their social networks once in the country.

The pre 1991 consisted of primarily Russian women who migrated following Costa Rican husbands. Some of the recent immigrants did go to Costa Rica to join a family member, but most chose it on their own, and looking to business opportunities. Coming from two very different Russias, the Soviet and the capitalist one, these immigrants brought values with them that causes them to distrust and therefore limit their social relationships with immigrants from the other period. In other words, the period of arrival becomes more important in defining their social networks than a common background and a shared cultural identity, and a shared identity as Russian immigrants in the host country.

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