Academic Hyper-mobility and Cosmopolitan Dispositions

Liudmila Kirpitchenko

Monash University - Australia

Abstract

Academic hyper-mobility provides a chance for exploring intensified intercultural communication encounters and the ever growing spirit of cosmopolitanism. This article hypothesises that in the modern conditions of academic hyper-mobility, cultural patterns play a significant part in framing the processes of communication. The purpose of this research is to examine the role of two differing cultural patterns – collectivism and individualism - in everyday situations of intercultural communication. Qualitative data are drawn from fifteen in-depth interviews conducted among mobile academics from Eastern Europe at the European University Institute in Italy. Several aspects of intercultural dialogue were found to be culturally significant for collectivists and individualists, including: in-group membership, expression of the self, cultural values, and cosmopolitan dispositions. It is a central argument of this article that cosmopolitan dispositions, which include openness to cultural diversity and mutual willingness to engage with new cultural patterns, are critical prerequisites to effective intercultural knowledge transfer and creation of knowledge.

Keywords: Academic mobility, intercultural communication, cosmopolitanism, collectivism, individualism, cultural capital, knowledge creation

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> Travelling light, rather than holding tightly to things deemed attractive for their reliability and solidity – that is for their heavy weight, substantiality and unyielding power of resistance - is now the asset of power (Bauman 2000:13)

The elegant terms of ‘fluidity’ and ‘liquidity’ have become the leading metaphors for grasping the realities of a present stage of the modern era (Bauman 2000). Being light and being liquid – this is what empowers modern academic migrants and this is what helps them to be hyper-mobile. Academic hyper-mobility provides a chance for exploring the ever growing spirit of cosmopolitanism reinforced by liquidity of intensified intercultural encounters. This article argues that academic hyper-mobility creates new environment for liquid intercultural knowledge transfer and creation and cultural patterns play a significant part in shaping these processes. Culture was found to influence many aspects of professional communication in academic environment (e.g., Hernandez Sheets 2005). This research examines the role of two differing cultural patterns – collectivism and individualism - in conditioning different outcomes for academic migrants in everyday situations of intercultural interaction.

Several aspects of intercultural dialogue were discussed as being culturally significant for collectivists and individualists. These areas of exploration include: in-group membership, expression of the self, cultural values, and cosmopolitan dispositions. Research findings reveal subliminal interpretations of cultural values, norms and beliefs play a crucial role in intercultural integration of academic migrants. Findings testify of culturally embedded ways of communication on a variety of levels and in a variety of roles; and demonstrate that culturally embodied experiences may become socially significant.

The empirical research was conducted in the pan-European environment in Italy which was described by a majority of participants as being liquid, cosmopolitan, welcoming and egalitarian, and therefore favourable for new knowledge creation. This research revives the ideas of cosmopolitanism which were prominently reinvigorated by the scholars of Enlightenment (Fine 2007), and argues that liquid postmodern cosmopolitan milieu facilitates knowledge transfer and co-creation of shared meanings. Cosmopolitanism is understood as an "orientation, a willingness to engage with the other . . . intellectual

and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity" (Hannerz 1996:104).

Similarly, Calcutt, Woodward & Skrbis, (2009:172) describe cosmopolitanism as including "Kantian universalism, cross-cultural competence, and either a willingness to tolerate or engage with otherness". Skrbis & Woodward (2007**:**730) add that "cosmopolitans espouse a broadly defined disposition of 'openness' toward others, people, things and experiences whose origin is non-local". It is therefore a central argument of this article that cosmopolitan dispositions, which include openness to cultural diversity and mutual willingness to engage with new cultural patterns, are critical prerequisites to effective transfer and co-creation of knowledge.

Locus of Academic Hyper-Mobility

Empirical research on academic hyper-mobility was conducted on the premises of the European University Institute (EUI) in Italy which is a perfect site for examining the experiences of hyper-mobile and liquid academics of the modern times. Italy happens to be a host country to the EUI which is an international educational institution overseen by the European Union. The EUI attracts mobile academics that have no particular permanent destination of migration in mind and enjoy a nomadic academic career in Europe. The Institute is synonymous with academic mobility in Europe and represents a vivid example of liquid academic mobility unbounded by a solid "permanent" place of destination. As Bauman (2000:13) argues, "the era of unconditional superiority of sedentarism over nomadism and the domination of the settled over the mobile is on the whole grinding fast to a halt". The EUI provides an opportunity to explore how social interaction develops among academic professionals who tend to be unconstrained by dominating cultural patterns, unlike cultural pressures of the "permanent" host society which are often felt by traditional immigrants. Fluid hyper-mobility presents a chance to look ahead and preview intricacies of migration and mobility in the age of liquid modernity which opens up less solid and more flexible opportunities for settlement.

My stay at the EUI as a visiting researcher for the full length of the academic semester provided me with ample opportunities for participating in educational activities presented by the scholarly environment of this renowned academic institution. I was offered unique advantages in experiencing academic research environment enriched from cross-fertilization of research traditions and academic approaches which is unavailable anywhere else. The EUI is a leading research and teaching institution devoted exclusively to social sciences. It especially emphasizes comparative studies and international links which are of particular interest for academic migrants. The Institute is an important site which promotes academic mobility by recruiting its full-time teaching staff, fellows and research students from all countries of the European Union and many other parts of the globe.

Overall, many participants described the EUI environment as pan-European and cosmopolitan. They stressed that they did not perceive an influence of the Italian societal culture in academic life. Nick was adamant about EUI international environment: "EUI is not Italy. Every professor is not Italian and every student is not Italian. I have here 95% of students from all around the globe". Ryan was in agreement and described the EUI academic culture as a kind of a ghetto since it was very isolated from the local life. Similarly, Louisa explained: "Professors here are from different places. So I don't see any influence of the Italian culture." This environment, described as pan-European and cosmopolitan, created a supportive environment so that many participants did not seem to feel any difficulties adjusting to a new culture of communication.

Research Methods and Study Group

For this study research data were collected utilizing the qualitative techniques of participant observation, focus groups and in-depth interviews. As a crucial part of my fieldwork research I conducted valuable insider's research by taking part in diverse doctoral and post-doctoral training activities as a participant and observer. I gathered plentiful qualitative data on students' learning experiences by participating and observing academic presentations, discussions and debates. The EUI presented exceptional opportunities for exploring academic intercultural dialogue through first-hand interaction with mobile academic participants – EUI post-graduate researchers, post-doctoral fellows and professors from many Eastern European countries who became directly engaged in my fieldwork research. For collecting hard qualitative data during my stay, I conducted twelve formal in-depth interviews with academic key

informants and one focus group involving three participants. The interviews were based on semi-structured questionnaires and lasted for two hours on average.

My fifteen participants originated from nine different countries of Eastern Europe, represented both genders and their age ranged from late 20s to late 50s. Interviews were conducted with seven post-doctoral fellows, seven post-graduate researchers and one EUI professor. All participants possess a vastness of diversified international experience and can be characterized as hyper-mobile academics. They often reminisced about their previous international exposure and compared it with current EUI experiences. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. Their personal details are presented in the table below:

No.	**Pseudonym**	**Country of Birth**	**Age**	**Academic Level**
1.	Alex	Belarus	20s	Postgraduate researcher
2.	Ben	Russia	20s	Postdoctoral fellow
3.	Diane	Russia	20s	Postdoctoral fellow
4.	Ellen	Russia	30s	Postgraduate researcher
5.	Gabrielle	Poland	30s	Postdoctoral fellow
6.	Jane	Romania	30s	Postgraduate researcher
7.	Jessica	Russia	30s	Postdoctoral fellow
8.	Louisa	Kazakhstan	20s	Postgraduate researcher
9.	Nick	Hungary	50s	Professor
10.	Ryan	Poland	20s	Postgraduate researcher
11.	Shantal	Belarus	30s	Postgraduate researcher
12.	Sophie	Bulgaria	30s	Postdoctoral fellow
13.	Stefan	Romania	40s	Postdoctoral fellow
14.	Susan	Estonia	30s	Postgraduate researcher
15.	Ted	Ukraine	30s	Postdoctoral fellow

Cultural Patterns: Collectivism versus Individualism

Research on modern intercultural encounters can benefit from exploring a widely accepted and generalized dualism of two opposites on a cultural scale - *collectivism* and *individualism*. This dualism originated in the field of social and cross-cultural psychology where it has a long tradition of empirical testing (e.g., Triandis, McCusker & Hui 1990). These two patterns differ in their depiction of the Self (Kanagawa, Cross & Markus 2001). *Collectivism*, as a cultural pattern, describes closely linked individuals who define themselves as interdependent members of a collective, whereas *individualism* stresses individual autonomy and independence of the Self (Triandis 1995). The Self is defined as interdependent in collectivism and independent in individualism (Markus & Kitayama 1991, 1998; Hui 1988). Additionally, collectivism stresses the importance of aligning personal goals with communal goals and emphasizes relationships. On the other hand, individualism maintains an independent concept of the self and relies more on an individual own beliefs and experiences (Triandis 1988; Triandis et al. 1990).

Concepts of collectivism and individualism are *social constructs* which have been created in the field of social psychology in order to standardize measurements of cultural differences existing among societies Hui, 1988; Hui & Triandis 1986). *Individualist* cultures emphasize "'I' consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence, individual initiative, right to privacy, pleasure seeking, financial security, need for specific friendships, and universalism" (Kim et al. 1994:2). In contrast, *collectivist* cultures advance

"'we' consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing, need for stable and predetermined friendships, group decisions, and particularism" (Kim et al. 1994:2).

Unlike cultural essentialists who contend that cultural patterns are stable and unchangeable, theorists within cross-cultural psychology (Triandis 1993, 1995; Berry 1994; Berry et al. 2002) view individualism and collectivism as fluid and malleable identities located on a cultural continuum rather than as juxtaposition of bipolar cultural dimensions. It has been shown (Triandis 1995) that the context and different social roles often determine the salience of either of these simultaneously existing cultural orientations. Additionally, group level and individual level differences have to be considered (Triandis 1995). Somewhat newer terms of *allocentrism* and *idiocentrism* have been proposed and used to distinguish between societal and individual levels variations (e.g., Alavi & McCormick 2007; Chen et al. 2007). It has been observed in my study that in some cases, cultural group characteristics may not align with individual cultural expressions.

Collectivist and individualist cultures differ in many aspects of behaviour, attitudes, values and beliefs (Markus & Kitayama 1991), and I explore how people holding collectivist views, attitudes and beliefs interact with individualist cultures. When asked to express their views on whether Eastern Europeans have collectivist culture and noticeable differences in adjusting to the local individualist environment, everyone tended to agree and many had corroborating stories to contribute. The areas of exploration include: in-group membership, expression of the self, cultural values, and cosmopolitan dispositions. These aspects in intercultural dialogue are culturally significant for collectivists and individualists and they are discussed in continuation.

In-Group Membership

When participants of my study were asked to comment whether, in their opinion, the Eastern Europeans have a collectivist culture, many strongly agreed. They described noticeable differences as they adjusted to the individualist environment. Many participants confirmed previous research that collectivist culture presupposed greater in-group intimacy in communication, and more disclosure in interpersonal relations (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey & Chua 1988). On the other hand, many tended to describe interpersonal relations in the individualist country as more distant, personally detached and sometimes lacking human closeness. Some Eastern European collectivists felt acutely the individualist environment of isolation and loneliness, especially in the initial periods of migration.

Ellen consented that in her home country she did many things together with her friends and there was a strong feeling of belonging to a certain group: "When we go shopping - we will do it together, when we were studying – we would try to study together and have conversations. So you are always a part of the group." But in the US she had a feeling that she was left on her own and "there was much more competition between particular people: in particular, who is the best? People were not that willing to share as they would probably in Poland." Ellen discussed challenges in building interpersonal relations and the apparent need to establish her among the new peers: "I had a feeling that I had to prove to the people who I am. Nobody took me for granted. I had to prove myself, to show through my actions, my behaviour that I am a valuable person". This example highlights a perception of many respondents that extra efforts are required of them to become in-members of a group. If in the collectivist culture everyone is considered immediately and almost automatically the in-member of the group, in the individualist society a person is exacted more individual efforts in proving themselves to be in-members of the group. It is an example of the differences in group belonging dynamics to which people from the collectivist cultures, in particular, are especially attuned to.

Extending on the feelings of isolation and greater interpersonal distance in their interpersonal relationships, participants commented on a greater body distance in the individualist culture. Research on cultural distance goes back to Edward T. Hall's (1966) observations on "proxemics" in a cross-cultural context. Hall (1966:11) noted that "the realization of the self as we know it is intimately associated with the process of making boundaries explicit". Proxemics, as the study of how individuals use and interpret space, distance, territory, crowding and privacy in interpersonal communication, has flourished (Hall 1974; Leathers 1997). Bodily contact is prominent in the "contact" cultures, and in the "non-contact" cultures it is restricted to an intimate circle of people (Hall 1966; Argyle 1981; Hall & Hall 1990). Sophie was surprised that nobody would tap you on the shoulder or anything like that. She was astonished when

she passed by someone one meter away and they would apologize: excuse me. Whereas in her home country you would bump into someone and they would not even apologize. It does show how differently people may use their "perceptual apparatus" and "sensory receptors" (Hall 1974:2) differently to attribute their own meaning to the intercultural encounters.

Expression of the Self

Social researchers describe expression of the self as interdependent, codependent, and attentive to the needs of others in collectivist cultures, while individualist cultures rely on independent and autonomous expression of the self (e.g., Triandis 1995). Triandis (2009:24) notes that "people from the collectivist cultures tend to be unusually sensitive to the needs of others, supportive, helpful, and even self-sacrificing". Similarly, this study found that for collectivists interpersonal connections were more meaningful and more stable in their cultures, as opposed to more instrumental and less committed in the individualist societies. Many noted greater superficiality of everyday interactions and lesser willingness to open up by individualists. Some participants have pointed out that individualist cultural values may be perceived as "selfish" and therefore offensive to some from the collectivist perspective. Collectivists commented that individualists would not be instinctively ready to help in the situations when help was obviously needed. Individualists had to be directly approached and explicitly asked for help.

Several participants observed that individualists tended to share only when they were asked to or when they were supposed to do it. For example, students reviewed each other's work and commented on it because they were asked to do it in class. Sharing readily did not seem to be natural for individualists. According to Ellen, in her home country students were expected to share many things, including their working spaces:

> If you are sitting alone and you are looking at this person thinking: Oh, my god, something must be wrong with this person, why is he or she by its own? In the US and in Britain, I had a sense that people even preferred to be by their own. They want to be left by their own so that they can feel comfortable, whereas in the East people simply do not feel comfortable being by their own.

It was also surprising for Ellen that high school students sat on the separate benches. Ellen also noted that students riding in school buses would sit on the aisle seat, not the window one. They would do that because they did not want anybody to sit next to them and they wanted to have more space for themselves. Ellen said: "my natural reaction is that I always sit by the window because I want somebody to come and sit next to me. Maybe I could have a chat and meet someone new and interesting." Ellen concluded: "It really disturbed me to be lonely and be by my own. … My PhD work is a lonely project. Maybe that's why you have more PhDs in the individualist environment because people just like to do things by their own and be by themselves. I like to be with a group of friends".

Individualists were described as being easy in initial conversations only and preferring interaction that was described as "shallow", "detached" and "superficial". Jessica said that it was quite effortless to start a conversation with Americans but it would lead nowhere. Sometimes she was disappointed to see very soon that there was nothing behind this conservation. Having superficial conversations did not mean that they were going to become your friends. It supports earlier findings that in the West people are good at the early stages of a relationship (e.g., Argyle 1982:72). On the other hand, it was not that easy to start a street conversation with Eastern Europeans but, once it was done, they could easily become your friends. Jessica maintained that while some cultures were happy with initial conversation and socializing, other cultures, like Slavic culture, needed deeper levels of involvement and socializing. Collectivists expected to find friends in people they studied or worked with, but individualists were content with shallow interpersonal relations. This example shows differences among cultures in the expressed needs and levels for daily social interaction.

Some participants observed that socializing in a more individualistic environment was very much formalized**.** Greater formalities created more interpersonal distance and detachment and revealed discrepancies between the "contact" and "non-contact" cultures (Hall 1966; Argyle 1981; Hall & Hall 1990). Jessica gave an example that in German culture she needed to schedule a visit to her friends' house long time beforehand. The time needed in advance of the visit depended on the degree of closeness. If you did not know each other very well usually you needed two weeks before your visit. You

would have to write a letter or make a phone call arranging this visit. Everything has to be prearranged weeks or months beforehand as a rule if you were not very close. But once you began to know people better and become closer you could arrange visits without this high degree of formality. It was strange for collectivist culture to arrange such things beforehand. Jessica said that usually you just called your friends and asked: "What are you doing? Can I come over?" She continued that in her culture "it is strange to prearrange visits for months in advance. How will you know what you are doing the next month on Friday at 7 p.m.? We are used to satisfy our needs for communication in an easier and faster way". Lots of communication was done in a written form in Germany and unless you had written a letter they would not hold an agreement or respond. It was strange for Jessica because she usually relied on oral agreement.

Expression of the self was also evidently different in the language use, in particular, in the use of pronouns. Peculiarities of pronoun use are described by Triandis (1995) who noted that when communicating with in-group members, collectivists tend to use an interdependent orientation during communication, using "we" more than "I". It has also been found that collectivist cultures do not necessarily require the use of pronouns, as Kashima & Kashima (1998:477) note: "Languages licensing pronoun drop are associated with lower levels of individualism than those that require the obligatory use of personal pronouns such as "I' or "you" as a subject of the sentence." In this study some participants indicated that the use of personal pronouns is often revealing of collectivist/individualist differences in two cultures. People in the collectivist societies talking about the self very habitually use "we" instead of "I". By using a collective pronoun "we" collectivists unwittingly reveal that their self is treated as a member of a particular social grouping – it may be their family, student group, ethno-cultural group, neighbourhood community or any other they feel they belong. Hearing "we" in relation to the self is not adequately accepted in the individualist cultures where "I" has a special significant meaning. This significance is seen as reflected in symbolic spelling of "I" with a capital letter. Pronoun use was noted to be a major cultural determinant.

Cultural Values

Participants of the interviews were asked to talk about their experiences in noticing cultural differences. This question prompted many discussions of experiences on how differences in cultural values are approached, interpreted and negotiated. Westerners were described by many as tending to be carefree and take things for granted. Louisa also saw substantial differences between the Easterners and Westerners:

> Western Europeans are different in a sense that they are more liberal compared to the Eastern Europeans. Their liberality of views is noticed everywhere from politics to sexual relations. ... I think our culture is more traditional and we have more serious approach to things compared to other Europeans who often take things for granted.

Stefan attributed these differences to the fact that Western societies were richer compared to the Eastern ones and Westerns might feel less anxious about their future. Stefan felt that sometimes Western students did not really try their best in education because they still could have jobs somewhere and use their networks and they knew that whatever happened they had different alternatives. Easterners took their education too seriously and they got extremely nervous if it did not go how they expected. Stefan believed that Westerners because of their general well-being were a little bit more relaxed about marking and graduation and there was less visible inter-student competition compared to the Easterners. Shantal made similar observations that people from Western "contented and cosy countries" had an advantage of not needing to think about their future careers and about their lives in the next 25 years unlike Eastern students who were very preoccupied and serious about their future.

Shantal noticed that even discussions of negative and conflict situations were avoided in the West. She said that it was not appropriate to express pessimism or talk about difficulties abroad. She said that everyone tried to stay optimistic no matter what. Even when she knew for sure that this person had problems when she asked him or her "how are you doing" they would say "perfect". When Shantal persisted and asked about their difficulties, they would dismiss her immediately saying that there was nothing to worry about. Similarly, Alex described different approaches in sharing personal information in collectivist and individualist cultures. In the West, he said, people would rather go to speak to their

psychologist instead of speaking to their friends: "When you ask them "how are you?", and they would say "great!" According to Alex, if you hear someone saying "bad" or "not that good" – this person must be definitely from the Eastern Europe. Only Eastern European people would answer this question truthfully. This observation relates to what Malinowski (1956:315) called "phatic communion ... [i.e.,] a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words."

The phrase "how are you?" in the phatic type of communication is designed to create a feeling of connectedness between people, but does not necessarily serve a purpose of communicating ideas (Coupland, Coupland & Robinson, 1992). In the Western cultures, people would exchange words as a matter of common courtesy, even though there is hardly anything to say to each other – "language does not function here as means of transmission of thought" (Malinowski 1956:315). Some participants tended to interpret this type of interaction to people's refusal to share their feelings and talk about their problems. Eastern Europeans perceived it as they were not expected to be sincere in daily interactions. They commented that people from the collectivist cultures would share their problems with their friends instead of wearing a happy and independent mask.

Cosmopolitan Dispositions

Hyper-mobile academics were found to display certain liquid cosmopolitan dispositions that helped them to be successful in intercultural interactions and career advancement. Cultural dispositions describing "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" were operationalised and defined by Bourdieu (1986:243) as *cultural habitus*. People's cultural habitus, i.e. "a system of durable, transposable dispositions" (Bourdieu 1977:72) that individuals display in relations with others, were found to be the crucial components of successful intercultural dialogue. It can be envisioned that cosmopolitan dispositions facilitate intercultural dialogue, knowledge transfer and creation of shared cultural meanings.

The core ideas of cosmopolitanism according to Hannerz' (1996:104) are an "orientation, a willingness to engage with the other … intellectual and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences". The idea that "willingness to engage with the other" leads to better societal-wide outcomes is central in a very influential work conducted by Florida (2002, 2005) on global competition for talent. These interpretations of cosmopolitanism were examined in my research which found that hyper-mobile academics tend to display many cosmopolitan dispositions.

My participants were disposed to be extra attentive and extra sensitive to culturally different situations. Jessica noted: "It was not like you were at home that you were familiar with everything. You had to be extra sensitive and attuned to differences". Similarly, Shantal expected to find many new and dissimilar things abroad. She did not perceive them as barriers or obstacles; otherwise it would have been psychologically difficult to deal with them. So her decision was to take them as they were and adapt to them easily. Shantal shared that she was so over-prepared for difficulties that anything that she encountered did not seem to be difficult. Everything was different and everything was hard abroad and she had to take it as it was.

Many participants had favourable expectations of learning about many cultural differences. Thus, Louisa described enjoyment in interacting with people from different cultures: "Their worldviews are different and you have to adjust to different viewpoints and it takes time to figure out that people are different. But it is also interesting to see how different viewpoints can be". Jane also told that "it was genuinely interesting… to hear someone speaking who experienced [diverse] societies and realities." Similarly, Nick enjoyed new culture very much: "everyone is very open and there are much more social and agitated people who care more about everything that is public. … I can talk a lot about public and private things that I terribly enjoy". Ted also noted that preserving one's own cultural distinctiveness could be of a great advantage. Alex agreed that "being different is not necessarily your drawback". It was only a lack of adaptation that mattered: "But when you adapt, those differences can play on your behalf" and he continued:

> I cherish these differences. … I am actually curious about cultural differences and it is a good challenge: How does this work in your country, in your culture? Can you give me a hint on how I should behave in this situation when I am in your country? It is like languages - whenever you learn another language it enriches you.

Ryan was quite convinced that being collectivists, Eastern Europeans have cultural dispositions to "easily mix and interact" with other people, especially because they applied extra efforts, such as learning foreign languages. He believed that Eastern Europeans were more inclined to learning languages and they learned languages quickly. Jessica also was certain that Slavic cultures were more communicative, open and social. In her view, Slavic cultures had "more needs in social life" compared to Western European cultures.

These comments revealed that the capability to deal with difficulties depended to a great extent on the person's habitual dispositions, propensities and inclinations rather than situations presented to them. Some participants learned to thrive in the new culture and found it even to be more comfortable and enjoyable for them. Sophie noted: "It is a different culture but it is probably in some ways better than [at home] in terms of acceptance and appreciation people have toward you. … You feel different but I don't think it is a hindrance". Jessica noted that there were always cultural differences, but what mattered was which of them had any significance when mediated by cosmopolitan dispositions.

Cosmopolitan cultural training was discussed by many as a way of mediating intercultural differences and promoting cultural intelligence. Susan spoke very highly of the cross-cultural training she received on "how to manage people from different cultures and what kind of difficulties we might face". In her opinion, lack of cross-cultural training "creates many problems. … and many problems arise because of the cultural differences and people do not even realize it." Intercultural training aimed at developing effective communication skills across cultures is a new thriving field of study and research (Ang & Van Dyne 2008) and this study testified to its increased significance.

Discussion

This study has revealed a range of perceptions of collectivism and individualism among Eastern Europeans. Along with many discussed commonalities in individual perceptions of intercultural dialogue, there are often more complex and sometimes ambiguous views on cultural patterns as well. This research confirmed that individual level views may not necessarily reflect group level perceptions. Hofstede (2001:16-17) cautioned that his country level scores may not be reflecting of the individual behaviour because single individuals may be significantly different from the group average, an error know as "ecological fallacy".

Indeed, there were individuals who could not fully support a group stereotype that Eastern Europeans had a collectivist culture. Especially people who arrived very recently were brought up in a culture which was less collectivist compared to the previous generation. Sometimes there was no trace of collectivism left among some younger people. There were participants who could not describe themselves as displaying collectivist traits and said that, especially in recent years, Eastern European cultures became much more individualistic and the new generation may be different in this respect. This finding shows that recent migrants may not possess strongly defined collectivist pattern and that cultural gap may not be very significant with the host society. Some previous research (Triandis et al. 1990) also suggested that people who do not fit the cultural pattern, for example idiocentrics in collectivist cultures, often choose to migrate to individualist cultures as an endeavour to relinquish themselves of extensive in-group expectations. Although migrants may represent the section of the population that does not fit into the collectivist pattern, my research found significant evidence for their collectivist values and behaviour.

Eastern European culture was described as far from being uniform. Eastern European intracultural differences varied geographically from more collectivist Easterners to more individualists Westerns from Eastern Europe. For example, Shantal, who is originally from Belarus, was impressed by the more individualistic culture in Poland. She kept saying: "They love themselves more". It was seen in many things: in the way they dressed, in the way they behaved, in the way they presented themselves. Other thing she liked about Polish society was that the elderly did not feel that their lives were finished just because they were retired. They continued to live their lives to the fullest. The ladies continued to dress up and to make nice hairdo and the gentlemen continued to wear nice shirts with ties. In her home country people over 60 stopped taking care of themselves usually. Once they had turned 60, their live revolved around their grandchildren and they did not take care of themselves. Their collective roles were more important for them compared to their individual image.

Equally, speaking about her experiences as an Estonian in Germany, Susan noted that they shared Western values: "We need privacy and we need some time to stay alone. At the same time it does not mean that we are not communicating with people. We still communicate with people but we are perceived as "cold" people who are not easy to get involved with". Susan saw many differences between Baltic people and Ukrainians or Russians for example: "The more south you go the more collectivist the culture is. The more north you go the more individualistic the culture is." She said that Estonians were very individualistic and they did not understand why people needed to be included in the group.

Some participants also discussed generational differences in Eastern European cultures. Alex said: "My parents' culture is definitely more collectivist. The younger my generation is more individualist." He believed that it was not hard for him from the younger generation to adapt to the Western cultural environment: "There were some differences that I could hardly perceive and then I learned what I should do and what I shouldn't. I won't say that it is tough or something fundamentally different." And he even discovered lots of positive aspects of a new academic culture: "We heard of 'cruel Western world' but academic world is not that cruel. Academic world is friendly and open-minded". Ben observed that collectivist culture is no longer true in today's Russia. Nick agreed that Eastern European culture could be much more atomistic and individualistic culture compared to Italian or even American culture. Ted said the new generation of Eastern European youth was more individualistic compared even to the West. The differences between generations were quite pronounced. The newer generation is more egoistic, more demanding and more individualistic. Similarly, Gabrielle spoke about the ambiguity of collectivism in the Polish culture. She believed that Poles were collectivist to a certain extent: they felt as part of the collective in the bad times, but in the good times Poles felt more like individualists. Gabrielle also observed that nowadays her society could be characterized much more as an individualist.

While some interviewees expressed some cautious reservations that Eastern European culture is more collectivistic**,** others were in more open disagreement. For example, Stefan felt strongly that for Hungarians the opposite was true. He described Hungarians as much more individualistic compared to the Westerners. According to Stefan, what was missing in Hungary was exactly a community. Everybody was working on their own and there was no trust among people outside of the family. People would not spend time together any more, according to Stefan. These observations show that individual perceptions of cultural patters may be ambivalent and sometimes differ from the group-level generalized perceptions.

Conclusion

This article advanced an idea that academic hyper-mobility displays the ever growing spirit of cosmopolitanism reinforced by the growing liquidity of intercultural encounters. Modern cosmopolitan dispositions lead to enhancement of intercultural knowledge transfer and creation. Culturally embedded patterns of communication were explored in everyday settings, based on the fieldwork conducted at the EUI among Eastern European mobile academics. In particular, culturally and socially significant aspects of intercultural communication were analysed. They include three broad study areas: in-group membership, expression of the Self, and cultural values. This research revealed that hyper-mobility preconditions cosmopolitan dispositions which are found to be favourable conditions for professional integration, knowledge exchange and creation.

Among the main findings of this study is a culturally preconditioned dissimilar value attached to in-group membership. Individualists were portrayed as being happy to be left on their own, and collectivists would feel that something is wrong with a person who is staying alone. Belonging to a group is seen as a natural state for collectivists while being alone is seen as a natural condition for individualists. Another related finding pointed to a different degree of expressed interest in being involved. Collectivists were found to be more interested in having deeper levels of social involvement and socializing of different types. Individualists tended to be happy with superficial connections.

Another finding pointed to a perceived difference in group acceptance dynamics. In the collectivist culture everyone is presumed immediately to belong to a certain group. In the individualist society a person is exacted more individual efforts in proving to belong to the group. Many expressed a common feeling that communal relationships did not happen naturally. Similar finding related to a degree of caring and sharing expected of the members of a collective. It was described as a natural state for collectivists and in contrast, individualists were seen as not as willing to share support, knowledge, or information.

Individualist people were seen as disposed to share only when they were asked to or when they were supposed to do it. Sharing and caring did not seem to come naturally in the individualist culture. Many people thought that individualists would share only if it were a part of their job description.

At the same time, individualists were described as having constructed boundaries for interpersonal interactions. One of the boundaries was a higher degree of formality in interpersonal relations when visits among friends had to be scheduled and planned long time in advance. Additionally, individualists were described as not being interested in deeper interpersonal communication and being satisfied with more superficial relations. Many participants commented that the most obvious cultural habit indicating superficiality was a common question "how are you?" which did not require an honest answer, just a readymade answer "fine". This observation revealed not only the prominent phatic form of interaction (Malinowski 1956) represented by devoid of meaning questions, such as "How are you?" (Coupland et al. 1992), but also, and more importantly, the collectivist perceptions of superficiality of communication. Collectivists when asked how they were would tend to describe in detail their state of affairs as they are used to do in their culture.

Building and maintaining interpersonal connections was a very important strategy for professional integration for many participants. It was important to have good friends and people who can support you - someone you can talk to: your professor, or supervisor, or maybe somebody else who can advise you what to do. Collectivists were seen as having more group obligations compared to individualists having more individual freedoms. Similarly, collectivists expected the collective to take more care of their needs too and perform some of the obligations on their behalf.

These main findings reveal very significant aspects of intercultural dialogue that shape current conditions for professional encounters leading to knowledge transfer and creation. Intercultural encounters highlight the need to possess mutual dispositions to global, universal and cosmopolitan values and attitudes. Recent research on intercultural encounters emphasizes the need for developing *cultural awareness* and *cognitive style of communication* as well as *cultural competencies* and *cultural intelligence* which are widely used in intercultural training programs nowadays (Peterson 2004).

Cultural awareness and *cognitive style of communication* relate to acquiring knowledge on cultural differences in values, beliefs and motives (Borden 1991). The term *cultural competencies* suggest meeting basic communication requirements in intercultural encounters, and *cultural intelligence* is a broader term and it is understood as highly developed abilities in intercultural communication (Peterson 2004). Further, cultural intelligence includes linguistic, cultural, interpersonal and attitudinal abilities attuned to a different culture (Peterson 2004:87-105). Expression of feelings was also discussed as an important part of intercultural communication that is culturally specific. Understanding and expressing emotions contributes to what Goleman (1998:7) termed *emotional intelligence*, understood as "managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together smoothly toward their common goals".

One of the findings of this study is that creating shared meanings is especially easy where people seem to be acceptant to new knowledge and new cultural patterns. Pan-European environment in Italy was seen by a majority as being cosmopolitan and egalitarian and favourable to new knowledge creation. It can be argued that postmodern cosmopolitan milieu facilitates knowledge transfer and creation of shared meanings. Being attuned to different cultures on many levels has been considered a necessary cultural attribute in the age of modernity. *Cultural openness* involves "the search for, and delight in, the contrasts between societies rather than a longing for superiority or for uniformity" (Urry 2000:7). *Cultural openness* is the main characteristic of cosmopolitan disposition, a stance that may be conducive to generating new forms of critical knowledge (Hannerz 1996:103-109). But *cultural openness* alone can be a limited and diffuse understanding of cosmopolitan attitudes (Skrbis & Woodward 2007), and *cosmopolitanism* has to entail universal ethical commitments and "a distinct ethical orientation towards selflessness, wordiness, and communitarianism" (Kendall, Woodward & Skrbis 2009:22). My findings are directly supporting these observations.

The idea, that cosmopolitan disposition leads to better societal-wide outcomes, is central in a very influential work conducted by Florida. In his *Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) he argues that, in the knowledge economy, territorial competitive advantage is based on ability to rapidly mobilize "The

Creative Class" seen as a combination of skilled people, resources and innovation capacity. Above all, it stems from being able to generate, attract and retain an effective combination of talent, creative people in the arts and cultural industries, and diverse ethnic, racial and lifestyle groups. Florida (2002) offered a formula of combining three Ts – Technology, Talent, and Tolerance – resulting in long-term prosperity, development, and innovation. Creative people endorse all types of diversity manifestations and migration is clearly praised by Florida (2002:750–51).

In the recent *Flight of the Creative Class: the New Global Competition for Talent* (2005), Florida showed how the U.S. in the last years has been losing its economic advantage and its reputation as a big talent attracting magnet. In Florida's (2005) opinion, causes of the U.S.'s declining position in the global competition for talent include growing cultural intolerance, social inequality and restraining security measures adopted after 9/11. These limitations have reduced the "willingness to engage" which resulted in an exodus of talented people, jobs and opportunities. It supports the idea that the expectations of the creative class are openness to diversity of all kinds, and above all else the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people (Florida 2002:218). It is a central argument of this article that openness to cultural diversity and mutual willingness to engage with new cultural patterns are critical prerequisites to effective transfer and creation of all types of knowledge.

Finding societal "willingness to engage" in the new place has been very important for collectivists in particular who thrive in a supportive and encouraging environment. EUI participants testified that they felt the most possibilities for self-expression in mostly egalitarian pan-European milieu where culturally-dominant forces were subdued. The pan-European cultural environment has been described by many as ideally combining multiple cultural influences and thus presenting a favourable setting for uncovering and developing one's talents.

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About the Author

Dr. Liudmila Kirpitchenko completed a Ph.D. in Sociology, Monash University in 2010. Liudmila's Ph.D. thesis is entitled: "Academic Mobility and Intercultural Dialogue: Eastern European Migrants in Australia, Canada and Italy". Liudmila co-authored (with Andrew Markus) book chapters on conceptualizing social cohesion and has published in refereed international conference proceedings. Previously, she worked at the Department of Canadian Heritage in Ottawa (Canada) and authored multiple research studies on cultural diversity, social inclusion, citizenship of immigrants, cultural participation and cultural industries. Liudmila holds a B.A. Highest Honours in Languages, M.A. in Linguistics from Kiev Linguistic University (Ukraine) and an M.A. in Central/East European and Russian-Area Studies from Carleton University (Canada).

Author's Address

Dr. Liudmila Kirpitchenko
School of Political and Social Inquiry
Monash University
Victoria 3800
Australia
e-mail: liudmila.kirpitchenko@monash.edu

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