Being a Female Scholar in mid-1980s–mid-2000s: Transition to
Post-Soviet and Academic Mobility

by

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Abstract

In this research I addressing status, life-world, and self-perception of female scholars from post-Soviet Russian academia who have had entered universities as students or researchers before the dismissal of the USSR. The primary question I want to explore is the shifting of positions and changes of life-worlds of female academics in the post-Soviet years.

Academic mobility serves in this research as part of a broader context of structural changes in the post-Soviet society, that inherited a lot from the late Soviet epoch, including the 'tools' that could help to adjust during the transition period.

Series of interviews with female academics might help to determine the existence and strength of instruments of confinement that still are in place within the gendered field of post-Soviet academia.

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Introduction

As Ilya Gerasimov, founder and editor of *Ab Imperio* journal*,* notices, personal distance from Soviet reality (and reality of transition period) creates possibilities for analytical distance (Gerasimov 2021). I personally have no memory or emotions about the 1990s or early 2000s (as being born in 1998), I only have (historical) knowledge and culturally produced prejudice about those years. I grew up with the tendencies in fashion, politics, literature, economics, music, civil activism, art that had been shaped in the very late 1980s-mid-1990s. These years of transition from the late Soviet (see, for example, Yurchak 2014 [2005]) to what was called post-Soviet became a constant, ambiguous, tricky topic – in all the above-mentioned categories of life.

However, the 'dashing nineties' [*likhiye devyanostye* – the most frequent reference to the post-Soviet 1990s] are not just a social sciences term or construct – it a discursive phenomenon of contemporary Russian culture deriving from lamentations and litanies, or as Nancy Ries presents it – 'discursive art of suffering' (1997). As a constant characteristic of culture, it is shared and produced by all the social strata (or classes). As Ulrich Beck puts it, social inequality became acutely individualized as individuals entered free labour market and started 'planning their own market biographies' (Beck 1992 [1986], 87). Hence, as a crucial stage of personal and professional biographies, transition period is presented in life narratives according to the results of own's entrepreneurialism. That can be applied to the post-Soviet Russian academic sphere as well.

Scientists and scholars, as the rest of the population of the (ex)Soviet Union, still have no commonly established and accepted language to describe their lives during the 1990s and early 2000s. It is part of the traditional popular culture, urban

'folklore', to address and mention precisely the 1990s as a holistic period of struggle, poverty, inequality, etc. However, the 1998 economic crisis followed by the state default is rarely mentioned, and early 2000s as still bearing its consequences are perceived through the lenses of a more prosperous epoch. Indeed, the popular adjective for mid-2000s is 'corpulent' [*zhirnye*].

One of the questions that has quite often bothered me is: was it really that poor during the 90s and were there not any mechanisms of 'survival' as there have been before? In this research I tried to satisfy this own inquiry and, I hope, shed some light on how the 'intellectual elite' survived or just led the life in these years. I am convinced that addressing exclusively female scholars brings a new or a different vision of how the transition years were perceived and lived. Academic mobility serves here as part of a broader context of structural changes in a closed society.

Series of interviews with female academics, conducted for this research, might help to determine the existence and strength of instruments of confinement that still are in place within the field of post-Soviet academia.

Research questions and main argument

In this research I address two main questions: What was it to be a female scholar in a society, that was changing politically, culturally, and economically and at the same time preserving traditions in social life? And with what 'tools' were female scholars navigating through these changes?

My main argument is based on the Bourdieuian frame of analysis of the field of cultural production and academic community. I presume that the interaction of economic and cultural capitals acquired before the demise of the USSR by the families of my respondents constituted the basis for their adjustment to the market

economy, which also affected the academic field. Furthermore, I argue, social origin of the respondents and their educational capital became salient when female scholars started participating in international academic mobility in the 1990s.

The structure of this research is motivated by the logic of answering the research questions and proving the hypothesis. First chapter that reveals the positions of my respondents in late Soviet society and early post-Soviet years, their interactions with families and scientific institutions and its members. The second chapter is dedicated to the personal preparation and experience of academic mobility and its outcomes – cultural, social, professional. This chapter unfolds the main argument and analysis of application of forms of capital. The first chapter builds up to that, uncovering the correlation between social origin and acquisition of capital of academic power. Both chapters start with historiographical backgrounds to the relevant sub-topics.

Context

International research foundations started to open their representatives' offices in post-Soviet countries in the 1990s[1]. At first, for many local scholars and scientists, their aim to sponsor research, academic mobility and publishing programmes was not clear and transparent enough. A lot of them recalled it in public interviews and newspapers articles of that time and later on[2]. Lack of such practices as competition

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[1] Some initiatives (funded by Open Society Foundation, for example) appeared in perestroika years, before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Mostly remembered of those was 'Cultural Initiative', in which most prominent humanities scholars and social scientists of that time participated.

[2] In weekly issued newspaper *Poisk* (official newspaper of the Russian Academy of Sciences) both positive and negative reactions on the work of different foreign (from the Russian perspective) research foundations were published. In some interviews scholars describe those grant programmes as an attack on Russian (Soviet) science. Some others, on the opposite, were supporting the 'internationalisation' of science and importance of this additional financing of scientific work. Especially valued were the grants for translation and publication of key works of social scientists from Europe and USA (e.g., 'Translation Project' initiated by Open Society Foundation). Furthermore, the whole referencing to those initiative as 'Western' was very ambiguous. On the one hand, it was a collective

for financial support (especially from non-governmental institutions) and the need to prove one's professionalism and productivity created a specific way of interactions within academic community and public and private institutions (Graham and Dezhina 2008). Those transformations were reflected in scholars' interviews and memoirs. In their discourse, scholars created and shared a special, non-unified narrative. Thus, when talking about those years (mid-1980s–1990s), they stressed the importance of events related to science and its funding and the impact those events brought to the 21st century[3] (see also Kojevnikov 2008).

Soviet system of science was 'constructed' in a way that scientists did not have to prove their efficiency and conduct cutting-edge research, but were systematically paid and honoured by the state according to their position in the institutional hierarchy (Graham and Dezhina 2008; Tromly 2014; Zubok 2009; Rogacheva 2017). After the demise of the Soviet Union the government of Russian Federation became incapable of fulfilling its financial obligations to scholars (pay salaries and sponsor research and publishing)[4]. Some scientists and scholars have left academia to start businesses (men) or moved abroad, some got married and quit being employed (women). Some others stayed in Russia, but had to adjust and look for means to shift from the Soviet model of life to a new, post-Soviet positioning (Ries 1997; Orlova 2019).

perception of 'non-Soviet', 'capitalist' 'other' – sometimes even with the connotation of evil intentions that the Western world (USA primarily) has towards the (ex)Soviet science and scientists (to demolish the science, conquer it, tear apart the intellectual academic community). On the other hand, 'Western' could mean just different, more evolved, innovative and prospering academia, where the talented and promising scholars could have a better chance.

[3] For now, it is not clear if the same narrative is constructed in other ex-USSR countries. Those observations are extracted from the existing sources (interviews, newspapers articles, memoires, radio talk shows) of Russian academics.

[4] This was the case for the whole sector of education and science, as recalled, for instance, in interviews of Minister of Education E. Tkachenko (in office in 1992–1996).

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This new reality of the transition period, affected by structural changes of different public institutions, transition to democracy and market economy, was less centralized and controlled by the government. From conversations with those who experienced that shift, university professors and researchers had to take up extra activities, besides applying for grants. For instance, some became private tutors for school children, to help prepare them for university entering exams. According to the new education law of 1992, government ceased to have the monopoly on education facilities, so the sector of private education (schools, tertiary education, and higher education) flourished in those years – and scientists and scholars took up teaching positions in such institutions[5]. Others started working in business, and others emigrated (which was called a 'brain-drain' phenomenon). In these conditions, the prestige of science and scientific profession became undervalued, as not guarantying any affluence or at least mediocre stability of status and payment [6] (Graham and Dezhina 2008).

From my own experience of interacting and conversing with members of contemporary academic community, reading their public interviews, and participating in various roundtables, seminars, and discussions, I got convinced that the legacy and memory of the 1990s is crucial to the modern post-Soviet academia. Since many Russian scholars of different age and experience reason that what happened to

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[5] According to statistics, by the end of the decade, in 2000, there were more than 350 non-state funded universities (Ziemer 2018, 482).

[6] It should also be noted that the remembrance of all those 'changes' is nowadays a part of collective memory of academic community. Although, there is a distinction between the official, 'governmental' memory policy (roughly speaking, according to 'official' narrative, 1990s are referenced as turmoil and chaos years, and nothing good happened in that time) and collective memory of academic community and individual memory of scholars. Remembrance of how financially affluent or poor were university professors in the 1990s would vary regionally and depending on the status of the institution they were working. So, professors of the Moscow State University (the 'main' university of the Soviet Union and the most famous one) would perceive salary cuts and funding shortages differently from professors of a small-town higher education institution or college, which was not prestigious.

Soviet academia in the 1990s dramatically influenced its present state and shape, it seems important to elaborate on such connections.

For the majority of academics, the first ever encounters with foreign countries and international academic world happened in the 1990s, after the free access to foreign countries was granted for ex-Soviet citizens[7]. Via academic scholarships and long-term academic mobility programmes from international research foundations, some scholars got opportunities either to hold a teaching position in a university abroad or conduct research and receive an additional degree, and more freely than before participate in international conferences. Nevertheless, I argue, there was a gendered difference in those experiences. Post-Soviet science researcher Irina Dezhina recites the main examples of discrimination instances when talking about international foundations grants policies in the 1990s. She refers to established gender roles, stereotypes and 'psychological expertise' that confirmed that women were undermined professionally because of their 'innate self-underestimation' and lack of 'leadership qualities' (Dezhina 2003, 89). The distinction has roots within the gender relations that constituted the social order of the late Soviet society that was more patriarchic and conservative than might have been declared. Women in Soviet academia were in the position of subalternity. As statistics show, it is still the case: in the head organization of Russian science, the Academy of Sciences, women represent the minority within the community of renown scientists – only 7% of all the members (Martynova, Moroko and Nechayev 2021).

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[7] I intentionally do not use the adjective 'Western' here because of the ambiguity of the meaning that would also presuppose a direct juxtaposition which is not the case in this research. Besides, as considered by some of the interviewees, 'Western' is a collective perception of a non-Soviet, 'capitalist' 'other' – sometimes even with the connotation of evil intentions that the Western world (USA primarily) has towards the (ex)soviet science and scientists (to demolish the science, conquer it, tear apart the intellectual academic community). For some other respondents 'Western' meant just different, more evolved and prospering academia, where the talented and promising scholars could have a better chance.

Literature Review

The shift and transition to the post-Soviet positionality are well-defined areas of social studies, revealed in the fields of women's history and gender studies, history of Soviet science, and cultural anthropology of the late Soviet society, that are very often overlapping (see further). Such prominent researchers as Mary Buckley, Sarah Ashwin, Sue Bridger, Lynne Attwood, Rebecca Kay and many others engaged in studying this shift and its gender dimension from the outset, with one of the first editions appearing in early 1990s. However, already since the end of the 1970s, scholars had started to try to understand the position of women in socialist countries, and especially in the USSR. Inequality may be defined as the leitmotiv of the works on Soviet women and their position in socialist country – either vis-à-vis their male compatriots or women in neighbouring socialist countries (as it is well expressed in Alena Heitlinger's *Sex Inequality in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia* (1979), where this direct comparison is the aim of the study). Numerous shifts and alterations to the generalised imparity are traced by researchers, with the focus on late socialism period and perestroika.

The majority of research performed by American and European scholars conceptually overviewed women's history in pre-revolutionary Russia and Soviet Union (e.g., Buckley 1981; Valkova 2008). This historical analysis of gender roles and gender politics throughout the last century has filled the gap in social history and historical sociology disciplines that laid the foundation for further research, including this one.

Researchers paid special attention to the 'women's question', as it was called by the Bolsheviks after the revolution. As Sarah Ashwin shows in her introduction to *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (2000), mobilization of

gender in the Bolsheviks' agenda during the 1917 revolution was driven by their ambition to create a new communist society, where women would be the main contributors to human, cultural, and ideological reproduction (Ashwin 2000). To reaffirm these role-settings, Soviet regime subjected women to a specific gender order, under which they were fulfilling their reproductive obligations whilst being given some equality with men. They were positioned outside of patriarchal families but still in relation to men, which were embodying the masculine power of the socialist state (Ashwin 2000). Throughout the years of socialist regime positionality and roles of women for the state ideology and reproduction of labour have been altered and reasserted depending on other political-economic circumstances such as industrialization and the Great Patriotic War (e.g., Attwood 1990; McKinney 2020).

Furthermore, studies were conducted in the field of comparative socio-historical studies, where the juxtaposition was drawn directly between USSR and other socialist countries, such as Czechoslovakia (Heitlinger 1979), Poland (Corrin 1992); some were focused on education (Ziemer 2018; Ratliff 1991). In some others gender relations and women's agency were implemented in holistic narratives about Soviet people's leisure activities, art, domestic routine, 'kitchen talks', simple discontents and hobbies (Ries 1997; Yurchak 2014 [2005]). Further studies of gender politics on the post-Soviet space also included juxtaposition and case-studies of various experiences from post-socialist space, including Bulgaria (e.g., Panova et al. 1993; Petrova 1993; Todorova 1993), Romania (e.g., Hausleitner 1993; Woodcock 2007), Poland (e.g. Titkow 1993; Fuszara 1993; Kramer 2007), Former German Democratic Republic (e.g., Funk 1993; Böhm 1993; Dölling 1993) and other countries.

Historians connect the above-mentioned socio-political events and processes with the 'waves of 'feminisation' of science – which is presented not just as a positive process of augmented influx of women into the scientific profession and scientific institutions, but a negative connotation of a loss of 'masculinity' or feminization of men in science and scientific community (Pushkareva 2010). For instance, by the mid-1980s women constituted 52% of all the scientific staff in the USSR and 40% just in Russia [RSFSR] (Agamova and Allakhverdyan 2000). Hence, women very much affected the representation and the image of Soviet scientific institutions (ibid), its certain fields and local academic communities, as well as the post-Soviet academic field. By the time the Soviet Union ceased to exist, women still constituted more than half of researchers and scientists, with that tendency preserved even in the transition period, when the numbers of scientific workers plummeted (ibid).

Thus, history of science constitutes an important reference for my research, especially the works of Graham and Dezhina (Dezhina 2003; Graham and Dezhina 2008). It should be noted though, that humanities and scholars are either implicitly implemented into the umbrella terms 'science' and 'scientists' or are out of the scope, which calls for a separate enquiry, represented in this thesis. Reason for that lacuna lies in the logic of formation and structure of the science studies field in post-Soviet countries. Researchers in the mid-1990s–2010s were 'obsessed' with the 'brain drain' phenomenon, which was considered the gravest for technical and natural sciences, which constituted the potential of the state for a 'makeover' (Graham and Dezhina 2008). Russian social scientists working on this topic (and, partly, the whole society distilled in popular newspapers, 'yellow pages') were biased and their discourse very often was an excellent example of litanies and laments that Nancy Ries studied during perestroika years (1997). Besides, the field of science studies

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constituted the main field of researchers' interest since the late 1980s, when the *glasnost'* policy permitted profound archival research. Soviet science studies embraced the vailed critique of communism regime, where the relation of interdependence of science and the state was very prominent throughout history (Kojevnikov 2002).

As I could decipher from the interviews, decisions (not) to participate in exchange programmes, international academic mobility or even to move abroad were not motivated by 'patriotic' or 'dissident' feelings, but driven by personal needs and situations (see chapters 1-2). That is why it seemed reasonable to look into research that focused on late Soviet and transition culture to better understand the processes that were governing (affecting) decisions on personal level. In their *Living Gender* Janet Elise Johnson and Jean C. Robinson point out the shifting of gender throughout the transition period, which is characterized by the 'multiplication of gender', meaning the multiplication of strategies and images that people started deploying in order to navigate through the market (2007: 2–3). This refusal to perceive the gender in its 'binary' variety, its complication are features of cultural shifts researched by Galina Orlova (2019), Tanya Rands Lyon (2007), Sue Bridger et al. (1996). Although not accentuating gender, cultural anthropologist Alexei Yurchak explores at the deepest level the culture of the last Soviet generation and its exotopy strategies that were gnawing the 'Soviet system'. In his *Everything Was For Ever Until It Was No More* (2014 [2005][8]), he reveals cultural strategies of exotopy that people all over USSR were deploying in order to navigate between public and private spheres in the late socialist reality. Exotopy strategies were commonly used to

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[8] Alexei Yurchak originally wrote his book in 2005 in English. Later, though, he re-wrote it in Russian, adding a lot to the volume. The Russian version contains more examples and illustrations and additional remarks than the original English one, which is why I am referring here to the Russian version.

confine to the everyday routine ideology on the verge of neither fully accepting nor rejecting it, as it was a constant state of affairs with no alternative (Yurchak 2014 [2005]). It is important to mention here the findings of a science historian Maria Rogacheva, whose research about private life of Soviet scientists in a closed science town [*Akademgorodok*] illustrates this paradox of being simultaneously consent in general with the socialist system as it was and being discontent with some manifestations and policies of this system (Rogacheva 2017, 155–161). At this point, I believe, science – or, more likely, the academic lifestyle, in the late Soviet society could be a form of exotopy, or escape from the official discourse and Soviet material reality.

I believe my research to be a contribution to the studies of post-Soviet culture, which motivated the analytical frame. However, I aspire as well to bring up the intersection of research on women in transition period and post-Soviet transformation of science in Russia. The fact that women in humanities and social sciences had alternative experience during perestroika and transition years than their female colleagues in natural and technical sciences is missing from the researchers' general perspective. Based at least on the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union the Russian government kept all the scientific facilities and tried to preserve the 'technical potential' and financially support scientists, not scholars, created a multiplicity of trajectories of 'survival', burdened with the need to survive 'academically', i.e., get acquainted with *other* methodologies, fields and areas of studies, literature, languages, etc. To understand the process of this shift it is important to reveal the mechanisms of transition that female scholars were employing.

Although I have previously familiarized myself with the works on international academic mobility and its impact on productivity, careers, connectivity, etc., I am not using any of these works here. I use the term 'academic mobility' here to designate any experience abroad that my respondents had – both long- (e.g., PhD or Master's) and short-term (workshops, research, training, etc.) stays. The focus of this research are the personal experiences of transition with academic mobility as a background, not the experience of mobility or mobility as social phenomenon.

Methodology

Interviewing

Although in contemporary Russia researchers have more freedom 'accessing' memory of the Soviet (through archival research primarily, see Shearer 1998, 559) and early post-Soviet, nowadays it is becoming more and more restrictive to remember something in own way. As David Shearer notices (1998, 560), the collapse of the Soviet Union and its rather strict ideology and further events did bring 'controversy and debate' in their immediacy, but now are stagnated. People affiliated with state-funded establishments (schools, universities, municipalities, ministries, Academy of Sciences, etc.) may find themselves deprived from the actual freedom of speech – especially in conversations with researchers sponsored by non-grata institutions. That is why, probably, sometimes the respondents had to reassure me where their 'loyalty' lies (in their home institution) – and tell me about all the great features and advantages of the institution (which is not necessarily untrue).

I based my research on 14 semi-structured biographical interviews. The sample was presupposed to consist of female scholars (economists, sociologists, philologists, historians, philosophers, linguists) from universities all across Russia, who had at least their doctoral candidate degree and positions of lead research fellow, assistant professor [*dozent*], professor and/or were highly ranked in the administrative structure – heads or deputies of teaching units, departments, research groups/centers. All the potential respondents had to become members of the (local) academic circles before the collapse of the USSR, meaning they were at least further than 1st year students of *spezialitet* [specialist higher education, 5 years of instruction was in place in all the higher education institutions before Russia joined the Bologna process in 2003], hence, adults that had to live through the demise of the USSR on

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their own. The interviews lasted from ca. 25 min up to almost 2 hours, 40 min on average.

Except for one case, I have had no previous personal encounters with any of my interviewees. My decision to contact a respondent was always based on the information about their mobility experience[9] and their current academic positions.

I started my search for respondents with the websites of the highly ranked universities of the federal status and continued with republican, regional, etc. I found at least one researcher with international academic mobility experience in general in every university. However, to find an academic with such experience in the 1990s became more problematic. In many cases academic biographies had lacunae for that time period, or the only mentioned trips were the conferences in Soviet republics. That did not fit the search as the goal was to find the indicators of non-'socialist' international experience, as providing more insights on the emotionality of the transition years[10].

Limitations

I received twice as much refusals as requests sent. Among those who refused to participate in this study only one tried to motivate her decision (lack of time – which to me did not really sound as a weighty argument but more as a polite way of showing the reluctance and unwillingness to be part of the research). In most cases I simply received no answer – and it felt frustrating as I thought I was losing the most important respondents, as I was hoping not to limit my research with respondents from prestigious Moscow and St. Petersburg (Leningrad) universities. Among the

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[9] In the years that interested me: starting from the mid-1980s but no later than the mid-2000s.
[10] Some of the respondents travelled both to (post)socialist and non-socialist states in 1990s–2000s and during perestroika.

explanations to such abrupt decisions, I find the general apathy, asthenia of intellectual community[11] caused by the war that Russia started in Ukraine. The last interviews I took fell upon the end of February 2022, and the majority of interviews had been scheduled in January or beginning of February, before the war. I was working with the interviews throughout March, and it seemed to me that the majority of my respondents were frustrated and sad. During the interviews they were clearly reminiscing about the times when they were travelling – and grateful for those first opportunities that shaped their international academic lifestyle today. They seemed frustrated and a bit lost – as they did not know what to expect next and how to be international scholars in these circumstances. Understandably, just that could be a disabling factor to do an interview with a young researcher. However, those who agreed to an interview were moved by my research topic, and named it the reason for their consent.

However, I presume, the war itself was not the only reason. As I continued sending emails in February and beginning of March, I usually received no answers. I think, they might have considered receiving an email from a student from a European university (the university that many Russian scholars and social scientists know or have visited[12]) with a still acute topic of academic mobility and grants in the 1990s to be dangerous or, at least, not very safe.

Last but not the least, many others refused without any particular justification, except, I presume, a certain disposition that lies within the university hierarchy with very unbalanced power structure. The dominance of authority matters significantly –

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[11] Here I use the words 'intellectual community' to refer to all the people who are involved in the production of public opinion, civil society, ethics. In other words, not just professors, writers, poets, but also journalists, public figures, actors, directors, musicians, etc.
[12] Besides, Open Society Foundation, as many other international research foundations, have been claimed to be of dangerous influence and labeled 'non-grata' and/or 'foreign agents', now an instrument of political repression.

and there are always more students than professors, an axiom that regulates how (renowned) scientists and scholars usually communicate and converse with undergraduate and graduate students. This social phenomenon in contemporary Russian universities is very explicitly illustrated in ethnographic research about students' papers that are commissioned to be done by 'scriptors' – ghostwriters, whose business has been flourishing since the new education law was implemented in 1992. Existence of such business is justified by how the 'administration – professors – students' triad is functioning politically and economically and what the main objective of each group is. In this triad, professors have more power over the students because they have the capital of political and academic power, hence a possibility to affect potential opportunities of students. Administration is interested only in quantifiable results and 'excellence' index, which gives administrators the dominance over the teaching body of any faculty (Davydov and Abramov 2021).

Although I have not had any personal relationship or been a student of those who silently refused to do an interview, the broad picture of power relations within the academia at its largest is one of the explanations for refusals.

Practicalities of online interviewing

The latter was chosen as the format from the beginning, and the Covid-related situation worldwide just proved it right. The main reasons for choosing Zoom and other online platforms (MS Teams – once) were the following. Geographical location of the interviewer and the interviewees would not have permitted scheduling interviews in person – some places were impossible for me to reach and many were still working from home, where they would not have felt ready to invite me. One interview, however, took place in person in a café – and was recorded on a voice

recorder. Possibility to record a meeting and save it in different formats was another advantage of Zoom. Its interface and functionality are more convenient and 'user-friendly' than those of MS Teams (although I usually let the respondent decide upon the subject).

Zoom software is compatible with different OS, which makes it easy to install and use no matter how skilled with computers participants are. Besides, only the researcher needs to have the software downloaded, the other person may use web version and enter the conference as a guest (Grey et al. 2020). Furthermore, for almost two academic years already students and faculty members around the world (Russia included) have been using Zoom or other online-platforms for lectures, seminars, extra-curricular activities, and conferences. Therefore, online face-to-face conversing is an approbated and largely used method among researchers.

On the other hand, such method of interviewing was majorly dependent on the quality of internet connection stability. Poor internet quality or any retardation were quite stressful for me, but, luckily, were not frequent and did cause neither emotional exhaust for both parties nor grave misunderstandings that could have affected the research (You 2021).

I believe that the issue of presence and, therefore, body language and in-person interaction is not undermined during online interview (Archibald et al. 2019; Gray et al. 2020). As some researchers show, during online interviews respondents 'are more open and expressive' (Deakin and Wakefield 2013; Gray et al. 2020). My experience proved that, indeed, online interview with a camera turned on and the researcher muted may be more (or as) fruitful than (as) offline face-to-face interview. Bodily performance of the respondent is still very much visible and observable, and

the option to mute oneself gives the interviewee the freedom to speak without being interrupted, or disturbed with some noises.

When analysing the interviews of post-Soviet scholars, it is important to keep in mind that they might professionally construct their narratives, consciously omitting some personal information[13] or presenting commonly known details instead of telling something different. 'Collectivity' of memory and stigmas about the 1990s was prominent in the majority of interviews. It could overshadow personal memories or correct them, making the representation of the lifeworld less visible.

Elite interviewing presupposes a disbalance in power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee; it is an important issue for this research, where the researcher and the researched are of the same sex but belong to sharply different generations, that in nowadays Russian political and social scene have intense and sometimes confronting interests. The power dynamic might be brought in the spotlight immediately, even on the stage of arranging the interview. Some of my respondents are respected scholars, with rich academic experience abroad and in Russia, some of them are high up on administrative positions; they felt responsible for *what* they were telling me; they felt responsible for *how* they were telling me certain things and in what way they were 'helping' me with my research and mentoring me (e.g., 'You know, my case is not that good', 'My story is not representative', 'I don't know if I did really help you'). At the same time, this balance became my personal problem to resolve, as the issue of researcher's self-identity, representation and positioning are part of reflexivity while doing the research (McEvoy 2006; Linabary and Hamel 2017; You 2021).

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[13] Or, as a pilot interview with a renowned history professor showed, a 'self-deleting', bureaucratic narrative might also be presented. As the respondent belongs at the same time to academic and administrative milieus of a top-ranked university, he could easily turn on the 'right' vocabulary or just omit personal experience and give a 'lecture' on history.

All the interviews are quoted anonymously, as it was agreed orally and in writing with all the respondents. Any details that might give a hint on the identity of a respondent are omitted, or changed, or generalized. When quoted, only a letter randomly assigned to each respondent will be indicated.

Analysis procedure

In his *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1996 [1984]), Pierre Bourdieu establishes the relations between social origin, educational capital, the conditions of cultural capital acquisition and its application. He proposes to measure educational capital in qualifications acquired, and social origin – by father's occupation (ibid, 13). In *Homo Academicus* (1988 [1984]) Bourdieu gives a more detailed description of educational capital. It is the sum of such previous educational activities and characteristics of educational institutions as: attended school, its type (e.g., private, lycée, etc.[14]) and geographical location (center of the capital city, province, etc.), educational success[15], and the higher education institution, its type and location and qualifications acquired there (Bourdieu 1988 [1984], 39–40).

While the framework of distinction and the field of cultural production is important, I argue it needs some alterations or further explanations to include Russian (late Soviet and transition period) case. The framework of distinction presupposes a dichotomy of low and high, a classification of social subjects 'distinguished by the distinctions they make' in the field of culture as a practice of consumption (Bourdieu 1996 [1984], 6). In the (late) Soviet society it was officially the

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[14] Naturally, there were no private schools in USSR, education was public and state-funded. However, schools were hierarchized by prestige depending on location, specialized instruction, social origins of pupils and teachers.
[15] In the case of the Soviet youth, it may be defined by the graduation with 'gold' (i.e., with the highest honours) or 'silver' (with honours) medals, which eased the university entrance requirements.

state that was regulating the ways of cultural consumption through ideology and planned economy. In practice, the late socialist society was as stratified as the one that Bourdieu is describing in his *Distinction*. Social origin in the late Soviet culture was the determinant defining the inherited cultural capital, as well as the economic one. The income of the family was the regulator of the lifestyle, hence, the habitus. Although the salient characteristic of the Soviet society was its lack of bourgeoisie, which appeared in the form of '*nouvelle'* in the transition period, after the start of the market reforms, *petite* bourgeoisie – engineers, workers' aristocracy, teachers, etc. constituted the 'backbone' of the Soviet urban population. As possessing higher education diplomas from technical or pedagogical schools and institutes, they were lower in the social classification than the 'real' intellectuals – university professors, assistant professors, lecturers, research centers employees, who had higher economic capital and cultural capital, due to the social origin (as by the 1980s the 'intellectual' employment became a passed-on family tradition rather than individually constructed biography[16]) and educational capital. Those were the determinants of consumption and the dividing line of distinction.

Bourdieu notices a very important methodological detail: it is crucial to determine the correlation of all the variables to look into the relationship between academic capital (which includes educational capital and its further development) and 'knowledge or practices in areas remote from academic education…' (Bourdieu 1996 [1984], 18). I suggest that this frame is applicable to the analysis of female scientists/scholars in their transition from the Soviet mode of (private and professional) life. Bourdieu's analytical frame (correlations of forms of capital and habitus with the position in the designated field) will help to accentuate those

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[16] 10 of 14 my respondents come from the families where at least one parent taught at a higher education institution and had a degree and both parents had higher education.

mechanisms of adjustment to post-Soviet conditions that are usually neglected by the majority of researchers who focus on fixating the changes in dispositions and fields' structures. They usually tried to place women within the (post)Soviet (scientific) society hierarchy with an emphasis on dichotomic differentiation (e.g., masculine-feminine, exclusive-inclusive[17]) and underline existing and overcome inequalities. What is important is not just to keep 'registering' the changes (on what levels women were included in changes, on what scale they succeeded or altered their lifeworlds) but understand how the transition was performed and using what 'tools', i.e., how this transition was performed by women in science.

Although I focus primarily on applying the Bourdieuian frame of analysis in this research, it is important to notice some similarities and intersections with some other approaches. In the introduction to an edited collection of research essays, Janet Elise Johnson and Jean C. Robinson built their approach on the 'shifting' concept developed by American researcher Chela Sandoval. 'Shifting gears' denotes 'negotiating between approaches' to identity, ideological positions, and 'consciousnesses based on culture, sex, and class', between which individuals or groups shift in order to survive the constraints of gender (Johnson and Robinson 2007, 3). Hence, 'sex/gender systems can also function as cultural "toolkits" from which individuals and groups may … be able to pick and choose among various frames of gender' (ibid). In that case the binary perception of the sex/gender system is challenged, and its inner boundaries become blurry (ibid, 4).

This 'cultural toolkit' approach, I argue, is very similar to the theory of field by Bourdieu. Sex/gender system – field is hierarchised, and actors are trying to get to the dominant position of domination, using their toolkit – a number of capitals that

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[17] For 'binary' perception of Soviet culture see Yurchak 2013.

they have acquired and dispose. Social origin ('class'), cultural and educational capital ('culture') and sex are elements that become salient at the moment of being applied at the field struggle – similar to the selective principle of using the 'toolkit' when 'shifting' within the sex/gender system.

Although in this research primarily the Bourdieuan analysis will be employed, as it permits to look wider at the transition period and individual adjustment within a certain professional group, the 'shifting' and 'toolkit' approach is worth mentioning – also because of its connection to Yurchak's analysis of exotopy and hypernormalisation (2014 [2005]). Soviet citizens were also shifting within the (Soviet) system (which, of course, included gender and sex) using 'cultural toolkits' that they had obtained from within the system's unofficial and official culture and from the 'imagined West', local version of the 'Western' world, that was playing a huge role in the formation of the late Soviet individual, my respondents included (Yurchak 2014 [2005], see Chapter 5 and 6, 311–460).

Sources

As it is clear from the title, the majority of my respondents work in the field of social sciences and humanities (economics, communication and intercultural studies, sociology, history, philology). Although Russian language has the umbrella term 'science' [*nauka*] for – altogether – social sciences, humanities, technical and natural sciences[18], it felt right to use 'scholars' to underline the exclusivity of the sample of

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[18] Furthermore, a scholar and a scientist are both scientists in Russian language [*uchenye*]. That is why, probably, it is more common to present oneself by the field: historian, sociologist, economist, philologist, linguist, etc.

respondents – in accordance with the English language vocabulary. In other cases, when referring to *nauka* and *uchenye* in general, I am using the term 'scientists'.

14 women from different fields of social sciences and humanities and from different academic/administrative positions became my respondents. Unfortunately, due to an approximately 50% rate of refusals, my sample, as I thought at first, was not as diverse as I had hoped for it to be. However, as I started analysing the interviews, I found out that, despite a lot of similarities in parental status, youth aspirations, passion about the field of occupation, the fabulae of the stories differed. Still, the scenarios of capital's dwellers having more access to better schooling system and higher education institutions are quite visible in my sample, and it is limited to a certain point without those respondents from North Caucasian republics, from the Far East, from Yakutia and Siberian cities and towns.

All in all, the majority of my respondents are from Moscow (5) and St. Petersburg's (3) prestigious research institutions and universities, although not all of them were born in these two capital cities. Two of my respondents are currently employed in universities abroad, but originally come from either Moscow or St. Petersburg. One interviewee is from a Southern Russian university, one is from an Urals one, two others are from Central Russia. Those from regional universities are from the same cities/towns, whilst those from Moscow and St. Petersburg either were born in those cities or migrated there in mid-2000s. They were born in the families of 'intellectuals' (higher education professors and researchers at research institutions, doctors) or Soviet 'petite bourgeoisie' (engineers, school teachers, bureaucrats, lawyers, journalists, high-skilled workers – 'workers' aristocracy', as said one respondent) – to use the Bourdieuan categorization.

All of them remained in academic occupations after the demise of the USSR or during the 1990s, some being in the middle of their postgraduate studies at that time. However, and it was an essential criterion of 'recruitment', they all had entered scholarly 'lifestyle' before or in 1991. Thus, they all had gotten at least partly acquainted with the late Soviet academic communities in their institutions and started their own research, even if on the level of *spezialitet* students. Some of them had traveled abroad, to socialist countries, in mid-1980s – as researchers participating in collective projects with scholars from other socialist states, or as tourists. Very few had traveled to 'capitalist' states such as France or Great Britain. None of my respondents told me about dissatisfaction or discontent with their academic mobility experience in the transition years, despite the statistically registered abundance of complaints of female scientists about the grant policies of international funds (Dezhina 2003; Pushkareva 2010).

Nowadays these women are on different stages of their academic careers, some had switched to administrative positions, some are still active researchers. As will be shown in this study, the intensity of academic mobility and augmentation via mobility of their academic capital defined their positions of today.

Among other sources that I have used are the compilations of statistics, which are also the sign of the times, as the field of *naukometria* [scientometrics] flourished in the 1990s and early 2000s (Pushkareva 2010). I also listened to a 'Women in Science' podcast (Liana Khapaeva, 'Zhenschiny v Nauke' ['Women in Science'], 2021–2022, https://podcasts.apple.com/ru/podcast/женщины-в-науке/id1596669309), although its main theme is, indeed, female scientists, not scholars. Without fail, it represented a good referential source, thanks to which I had an opportunity to compare the experiences of female scholars and female scientists.

Besides, it partly became a source of my inspiration for writing this research, as the topic of the podcast that came out this winter proved the actuality of the theme.

Chapter 1.

Backward glance at women and the late Soviet society

After the October revolution Bolshevik government launched the 'likbez' [*eradication of illiteracy*] programme. One of the aims of this programme was to create the influx of female involvement in science. The focus was on previously illiterate women from proletariat and rural settlers – to substitute 'intelligentsia' and its dominance in scientific and scholarly liberal or other non-Leninist-Marxist discourse (Pushkareva 2011, 92–93). This policy inchoated the official history of Soviet female scientists and scholars. Gender historian Natalya Pushkareva dedicated one of her articles to the most famous female scientists – but not scholars (2011).

Since then, women constituted a large proportion of all the labour force and educational institutions in the Soviet Union, with high enrollment figures in universities and a major share in 'intellectual' occupations (doctors, school- and college-teachers, engineers, bureaucrats etc.) (Heitlinger 1979; Pilkington 1992). Nevertheless, researchers came up with an observation that the number of women in high and decision-making positions and their salaries did not correspond to their input and contribution, although they had a constitutional right to receive an equal pay for an equal work (e.g., Pilkington 1992; Ashwin 2000). This 'glass ceiling' concept constitutes an important basis of gender studies theoretical approach to social analysis and feminist critique. However, feminist agenda was not shared by Soviet women until very late – those were primarily 'Western' researchers analysing the Soviet case through the lenses of inequalities. Perestroika and the period of transition, though, changed the perspectives of Russian researchers who, especially via integration into international academic networking, got more acquainted with the gender studies methods of analysis.

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The epoch itself provoked the shift in social inquiry, with cultural and anthropological turns governing topics and methods of research, such as women's positionality and representation in late Soviet culture and culture of the transition period. Galina Orlova recently published an article on the changes of images of femininity and sexual permissibility that she observed on the pages of a widely circulating newspaper *Komsomol'skaya Pravda.* As she shows, the traditionalist ideology of feminine modesty and passive, home-confined behaviour very quickly fell apart after the demise of the USSR and its heavy censorship (Orlova 2019). In 2020 Judith McKinney published her research on Russian women's everyday experience of economic transition. As an economist, she tried to grasp, from interviews with urban women from Central Russia, the reflections of economic change in life of ordinary women – school teachers, bookkeepers, bureaucrats etc. Her interviews provided insights on how women *remember* and *interpret* their responding to particular changes in market and state institutions (e.g., voucher privatisation, 'liberalisation of prices', irregular wages) (McKinney 2020: 3). Such approach correlates with the one that Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick used in their earlier work (1996) about women in Post-Soviet Russia and their image of 'heroines', the most sustainable of all the Soviet ideological clichés. These authors make the emphasis on the path-dependency of the post-soviet development and highlight, as McKinney did, the multiplicity of factors defining women's behaviour and choices throughout the transition time, which is, of course, also applicable to women in science.

On a more systemic level, such scholars as Mary Buckley, Lynn Attwood, Rebecca Kay and others looked into the structural changes and re-shaping of gender and women's agency in post-socialist countries (e.g., Buckley 1997; Attwood 1997;

Kay et al. 1996). I think that the key idea of the existing literature on gender and transition is that the new gender order of the post-Poviet was as 'fuzzy' (to use Verdery's word and definition: Verdery 1999) as everything else and was dictated by social interrelations and relations with the state. The 'uncertainty about the future' (Buckley 1997: 5) is expressed through the narratives of transition of academics as well.

Families and careers

A few researchers point out the 'normalcy' of 'traditional' gender images in the lifeworld of ex-Soviet Russian people (e.g., Attwood 2000; Kay et al. 1996; Rands Lyon 2007). Lynne Attwood traces the development of images of Soviet man and Soviet woman throughout the 20th century, emphasizing its volatility and subordinance to the 'goals' of the ideology and party. The accepted image of a working mother of a few (Buckley 1981) was compensated by long maternity leaves and state subsidies (although apparently only for urban dwellers). This image was frequently reflected in Soviet cinema and literary works of the 1970s–1980s (Mamonova 1989; Lawton 1992).

Paradoxically, these supporting measures were simultaneously translating the idea of a stay-at-home mother, a housewife, reproducing the labour force (Attwood 2000) and keeping the hearth, and 'proliferated the 'traditional' gender norms' over 'androgenous worker-women and blurred sex roles' (Lyon 2007, 25). Interestingly, it is noticeable that such gender images are reproduced within the studies of academia in post-Soviet Russia. Female scientists and scholars are studied through the lenses of their potential/failed/restricted motherhood, peculiarities of socio-psychological characteristics, and femininity (in)compatible with their careers in science (e.g.,

Gritsay 2011; Pushkareva 2012, 2013) or reasons for underrepresentation in the field (Dezhina 2003; Pushkareva 2013). Conflict of family and motherhood and career is highlighted as the core issue of female scientists' lives (Gritsay 2011; Pushkareva 2011) – transferred from the general assumption that such conflict regulates lives of all women; it is a surprise for researchers to stumble upon female scientists with big families of more than 3 children in the after-war period. The first Russian post-Soviet gender researchers were fascinated with Soviet female scientists who 'managed' to, presumably, successfully, combine motherhood (being mothers of 3, 5, 7 children) and high-rank positions of members of the USSR Academy of Sciences (Pushkareva 2013). Such approach and researchers' reactions are exactly the products, I would say, of this reinstated 'patriarchal culture' of the late Soviet period (Heitlinger 1979; Ashwin 2000), as they belong to the same generation as the respondents of this research. These women grew up with these mixed gender signals, where 'traditional' gender roles were intertwined with the early Soviet egalitarian discourse, which was also reflected in the USSR constitution that guaranteed the right to receive an equal pay for an equal work (e.g., Pilkington 1992; Ashwin 2000). For instance, almost all of the respondents told me that they still agree with women doing the majority of household chores, raising children without any help from the men, because the latter 'are just set in a different way' and 'are not fit to do house duties' ('how else?' said to me one of the respondents, when replying to the question why the husband was not helping with the chores). Even when some of the respondents' husbands were sharing the house chores with them, 'some things had to be done only by women' (interview with V.) Hence, women were active participants in the reproduction of the 'traditional' gender roles – and were aware of it and accepting it.

That is why the majority of my respondents did not present their lives as a struggle between personal life and family and their academic career. Those who became mothers were telling how fulfilling the motherhood is. It did not matter how many children they were having – they were not choosing motherhood over scholarly and administrative occupations or vice versa, they 'wanted it all'. It is applicable to the both generations of my respondents – those born before the 1960s and those born in the 1960s.

Labour as such was considered as an obligation, and making of a career was out of the discourse, though the act itself was well familiar to all Soviet citizens. The whole (probably, (neo)liberal) rhetoric of a career-making person was only implicitly brought by the interviewees, but was usually meant as something their husbands were occupied with, husbands who had to compensate for 'not being fit to do housework' and nurturing children. Those women who are at the time of the interview (presumably) happily married (in either of their marriages) and whose husbands are employed, were if not proud but pleased to share the latter, or even praise achievements of their husbands. No matter how successful they became themselves, my interviewees were also pleased with the successes of their families. They often referred to their own careers as narratives of 'it just happened like that' or 'I was lucky'.

Three respondents shared that their husbands, as soon as the opportunity was provided, decided to start own businesses, often giving up their academic careers. All the three husbands failed, sometimes multiple times, which led them to being depressed and shift the burden of providing to their wives. Consequently, all three couples divorced (and women remarried and advanced in their careers). In these scenarios women gave consent to their husbands trying out being literally

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entrepreneurial, while the women had to be entrepreneurial figuratively – by superposing paid and unpaid work, staying in academia, which meant doing research in the night, after putting children to sleep, and being employed somewhere else. Some of them had to refuse a few academic mobility opportunities or choose very selectively because the household would not sustain with them being away for more than ten days.

Despite this double burden (or quadruple, as one respondent said, as she was overloaded with administrative work besides her research, her teaching, and house chores), women, as Sarah Ashwin and Elain Bowers put it, 'were not succumbing to the call of the home <…>, but were doing their best to remain in paid employment' (1997, 25). Their 'entrepreneurialism', or 'creativity' with time (e.g., going for a walk with the baby stroller to read while the child is asleep) and skills (advanced foreign language knowledge, quick typing, driver's license, etc.) were used as an 'income supplement' outside of any institutions and without institutional support. These tools of 'long-term survival strategies' (Bruno 1997, 57) are the manifestations of educational capital, obtained from schooling and academic institutions and products of families' economic and cultural capital.

Because of the inexplicitly imposed image of traditional gender roles within the family, husbands were not always happy when their wives, my interviewees, were finding their ways to adjust and re-employ their competences provided by educational capital. In three cases divorces followed after my respondents came into positions of power at the institutions where they worked, whilst their husbands lost their new businesses or had been fired. Activity of the wives (promotions with bigger salaries, travelling abroad and networking outreach) was inadmissible and hard to understand, if husbands were casted away from any employment and struggling with personal

crises because of that. However, in all the other cases that I have collected, being active in order to help family sustain was acceptable. When women were enjoying their attempts to bring more money to the family, (i.e., not doing it just out of the necessity but being really invested in the developing networks and travelling, etc.), members of the family were sanctioning women (husbands and, sometimes, mothers-in-law), and relationships were breaking up.

Education and academic career

Bourdieu describes academic capital as 'the guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school, the efficiency of which depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family' (1996 [1984], 23). Schools usually become the media of 'scholastically recognized knowledge and practices' that help to form and develop dispositions that go beyond 'academic market' (ibid). Social origin, as the 'initial disposition', makes a difference in that process (ibid).

In the cases of my respondents this intersection of social origin and educational capital mattered significantly, and I presume it may be extrapolated on a larger sample of intellectuals and 'petite bourgeoisie' that went through the transition period after the demise of the Soviet Union. Families of intellectuals (and also of what Bourdieu considers as 'petite bourgeoisie' – in the late Soviet society they were on approximately same social positions, i.e., having more or less similar initial dispositions) were driven by the classical education for their children, which included getting acquainted with the classical culture (European and Russian) and foreign languages as the media of 'legitimate areas of culture' (Bourdieu 1996 [1984], 14). In some instances, the choice of sports for children (e.g., fencing) interposed. This

cultural capital, inherited from the family, was at the base of later acquainted skillsets (moxie, activism, friendliness, easiness, openness, etc.) that were important both within and beyond academic market, and definitely, based on the interview materials, crucial for 'successful' academic mobility experience (successful meaning changing the disposition of the actor in the field). Being used to different sorts of extra-curricular activities, knowing at least one foreign language and at least superficially European culture, with the intersection of personal qualities developed via school and university activities (theater, chorus, sports, etc.), facilitated temporary adjustment to the environment abroad and establishment of friendships and academic relations.

Long process of establishing the Soviet intelligentsia formulated in the 'educated' families of university professors and scientists the disposition for their children to follow the same path. Such life strategy was believed to distinguish them from the working-class families and other 'non-intellectually' occupied classes. 'Getting into university was not even a question for the family', 'there was no discussion', 'it was only logical', or 'nothing but higher education at the Moscow State University', my respondents recalled. It was convenient and self-evident to continue with this status of a university professor or a research institute employee. Thus, this 'cultural nobility' was functioning by the principles of self-reproduction. It was not, however, an inaccessible community, but connections with the members were (and still are) of high importance. That is why, I argue, the role of a male figure – father, husband, father-in-law, research supervisor – appears in the background of every narrative. Those male figures helped to choose the specialization at university, develop doctoral thesis topic, get into an exchange programme, find a better position in a better research institution.

Because of the 'prestige' of the occupation – and not because of the family's decisions and plans, some of respondents of lower social origin (from engineers and 'workers' aristocracy' families) wanted to pursue the career of university lecturer or professor. As one respondent said, 'we were not thinking about doing research, we wanted to teach at universities, and one needed a doctoral candidate degree for that' (interview with R.). Besides the clear financial incentive and relative freedom with time management (see below), academic employment was very often chosen as a strategy of exotopy. Once they motivated their choices of the discipline by the 'remoteness' from the official ideology, they showed their dedication to the personal politics of staying away from the ideology reproduction[19]. Studying philology or linguistics, choosing a certain period in history, choosing 'cybernetic economics' as the discipline at university were the strategies to remain between official (public) and routine states of existence that the majority of Soviet people had to live by.

Transition period, with the mixed morals, motives, and social ideals (as perceived by my respondents) also demanded a certain strategy to navigate through. Staying in academia and going abroad prevented from being unemployed. Besides, academic *lifestyle* was apparently an 'antistress' cure – it helped stay 'sane', organized, positively challenged, it was giving meaning. On the other hand, as one respondent recalled, doing research and looking through some old archival documents when everything was falling apart felt like staying in a 'bubble' (interview with E.). So, science as an occupation, apparently, for many became a place of exotopy – in both positive and negative connotations.

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[19] Except for one respondent, who was thinking about joining the party to facilitate for herself the admission to *aspirantura*. Some others participated in different youth organisations, but were not the adepts of the party ideology – at least this is how they presented themselves during the interviews.

Women and careers

Researchers came up with an observation that the number of women in high and decision-making positions and their salaries did not correspond to their input and contribution, despite the constitutional right (e.g., Ziemer 2018). At the same time, women in late Soviet Union constituted more than 50% of all the labour force and educational institutions, with high enrollment figures in universities and a major share in 'intellectual' occupations (doctors, school- and college-teachers, engineers, bureaucrats etc.) (Heitlinger 1979; Pilkington 1992; Ziemer 2018), which was proving their right to work as men – proving to women themselves, primarily. And that is, I argue, one of the reasons why practically all my respondents were convinced of not being discriminated on any level of their studies and careers.

The other reason lies within the personal perception of family experience of the respondents and the collective experience of Soviet women, whose generation the interviewees were observing while growing up. Respondents were reflecting on the lives of their mothers, which were facing Soviet-style 'glass ceiling' (in families where both parents were academic workers, while the fathers, specifically in the fields of humanities, were the perfect example of the 'glass escalator' effect, meaning that men were moving forward with career appointments and appreciation faster than women in the sphere dominated by female professionals (Williams 1992). As one respondent stated, 'in my field there are very few men, that is why the higher you look at the hierarchy, the more men you see there' (interview with K.). Therefore, my respondents were usually aware (and were stating facts when responding to my questions) of their mothers or grandmothers being limited in their career advancement. For instance, they stated that it was hard for pre-war generation of women to get into university in the afterwar period, they had issues defending their

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dissertations – either by being made to quit doctoral schools [*aspirantura*] after childbirth or by being failed at exams. If fathers had their doctoral degree [*doktor nauk*], mothers usually had the doctoral candidate [*kandidat nauk*] degree. However, these mothers of my interviewees with the degree were respected in society and professional environment. Thus, discriminatory practices were indeed hard to decipher in the normality of everyday life. Besides, at that time no one had the analytical and theoretical apparatus to deduct discriminations in the intellectual circles. And, importantly, my respondents carried with them this perception of social relations in the Soviet society through their lives. They are telling about their past from the perspective of the past, and they are 'judging' today's state of affairs from what they have learnt and experienced. As one respondent told me, when answering about double burden of paid and unpaid work, 'we were not thinking about it then. Now we share responsibilities, we negotiate' (interview with R.)

However, even if known, knowledge about someone else's experience does not necessarily provoke any 'empathy' towards or understanding of one's own situation or the situation that has been told about another person. It is more likely for such stories to become just parts of the larger self-presenting narrative – narrative of a cognizant person but decent and hard-working. Such stories are motivated by the idea that all the merits came from own efforts – so why would there be any gendered attitude? Even when there were cases of gendered impediments in careers of mothers and grandmothers of my respondents, those are recalled as cases of the past, parts of the family history – or as signifiers of the early post-war years, when hardships fell on everyone's shoulders.

Hence, belonging to the Soviet intelligentsia, that by the mid-1960s–1970s (childhood years of the respondents) was ornated with material benefits, had the meaning of a recognition symbol.

One interviewee told me that her grandparents, scientists form St. Petersburg-Leningrad, after the war, in the 1950s, were *offered* to move to the Urals to become heads of a laboratory in a newly established research center and were compensated with a private flat whilst in Leningrad they had to live with a few children in a '8 square meters room' in a communal flat. Consequently, by the 1970s, their children, parents of the interviewee, were already with more developed dispositions and had all the potential of reaching one of the highest positions on the intersection of economic and cultural capital. Their daughter, hence, could continue with this tendency. She went to a school with advanced English instruction, and her parents could hire a German language tutor so she could obtain her PhD from a university in Europe – decision advised by the father who had started promoting student exchanges between European higher education institutions and the university where he was one of the leading professors and administrators.

Another respondent, before she moved with her family to Europe, lived in Moscow in a '2-bedroom apartment, in a *prestigious* building, next to the river'. Her parents were professors of medicine, and other members of the family were 'veritable Soviet intelligentsia – doctors and engineers' (interview with K.).

Therefore, as this advanced material 'prestige', which was also defined by a high salary (a few interviewees said exactly the same: 'the salary of an assistant professor [*dozent*] was 320 rubles, with the mean salary of 150 rub') and a relative freedom of defining own working hours, was accessible for all the members of the

family, it was obvious that a woman could be as much appreciated as a man – if they both showed their competence.

The conclusional interview question – 'how was it to be a woman in science?' was interpreted by interviewees through the lenses of discriminatory practices. They though that I was asking about harassment episodes or glass ceiling effect they had to deal with. Very often their responses revealed those gender images and practices, that had been transferred to contemporary Russian (academic) work culture from the late Soviet times (see also Rozhanovskaya and Pardini 2020).

My interviewees replied that it was 'wonderful' to be in academia and that they have never really noticed any 'gender differences'. I argue that this phenomenon can be explained by the Thomas theorem. If my respondents initially did not believe that they could be discriminated by their gender[20], they would not believe that it was possible. Natalya Pushkareva, Russian gender historian, makes a similar assumption in one of her articles on female scientists. She presumes that because of the initial promises of the Soviets to women on the matter of equal pay and equal opportunities with men Soviet women were not 'seduced' by feminist movements in European countries, they were more or less guaranteed access to labour market and career advancement (Pushkareva 2011, 92). Indeed, all my respondents did get into prestige universities, graduated doctoral schools, travelled abroad and acquired academic and scientific power and intellectual renown without being openly stalled or discriminated. Lack of any critique or unfair attitude from male colleagues is what Irina Dezhina's interviewees (female researchers from natural and technical sciences) noticed when responding about potential reasons for their careers stalling.

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[20] Other characteristics such as ethnicity (labeled in discourse as 'the 5th paragraph' – the paragraph in the passport of a USSR citizen where the 'nationality' is noted) were mentioned. Two respondents said they had had limited possibilities because their 'nationality' in the passport was Jewish.

In other words, women were not noticing whether their male colleagues were judgmental, condescending, arbitrary etc. towards them. They were naming their personal qualities or external factors (e.g., household and family obligations) as obstacles to the full-on research mode. It looks, indeed, as if they were purely not believing that all those self-lowering characteristics and household obligations were at any scale demeaning or discriminating. And they do not abide today either.

However, researchers stress out the gap in payment and unequal opportunities structured by the multiple changes in Soviet ideology. There were waves of 'luring' women into working alongside men (for instance, during Great Patriotic War[21] and in the after-war period) which were overcome by ideas of working mothers and stay-at-home mothers, based on the construction of ideal Soviet man and Soviet woman (Attwood 1990; Lyon 2007). That is why so many resented the whole question and started talking about equality and lack of discrimination. I do not want to step here with claims that it is not true (referencing, especially, that very few women have been and are part of the Academy of Sciences Presidium). Besides, as Tania Rands Lyon proves, egalitarian ideas that dominated the state ideology in early Soviet years, did not disappear (2007). My respondents replied that no gender discrimination ever occurred to them, because they were raised with the belief that men and women ought to be equally provided with work opportunities and equally paid for the equal qualifications. Not everyone, naturally, had compared the statistics, showing discrepancies in payment.

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[21] 1941–1945, years of USSR's participation in the WWII.

Chapter 2.

System of science and its transformation

The system of Soviet science is essentially presented by researchers as a hierarchy of All-Union, republican, and regional institutions, where science and higher education and teaching, although sometimes overlapping, were divided between research facilities and institutes and universities, respectively (Graham and Dezhina 2008; Rogacheva 2017). Consequently, the hierarchy regulated the distribution of prestige among all the scientific workers that were registered in the USSR. Science in the USSR has been created as a sub-division of state and bureaucratic structures, which imposed the idea of its funding by the state and state being the patron of science, and ensured high social status for those employed in the sphere (Gokhberg 2011, 11). In the 1990s the government launched the integration of science and teaching on the basis of federal research universities, simultaneously aiming at universities becoming self-financed with the use of market tools.

According to Lev Gokhberg, by 1989 4% of working USSR citizens were employed in various scientific institutions (research institutes, universities, researchers and inventors at enterprises etc.) (2011, 8–9). Naturally, it would not be correct to claim that all those people registered as employees of research facilities were directly involved in scientific production. Even fewer were actually producing new knowledge. It is peculiar to notice that teaching positions in universities were frequently preferred over research positions. The better part of my sample revealed that their dream or goal when pursuing the doctorate was to be hired as a lecturer. Fewer respondents told me that their passion was research, and one complained that the administration of the university where she is the leading research fellow makes her teach seminars, which she perceives as a burden.

Besides the over-expanded form of scientific institutions, historians of Soviet science also highlight its 'semi-institutionalized' character of networking, explaining it by the prevalence of strictly official channels of communication (Longrigg 1972, 225). No shifts in Soviet ideology (e.g., the Thaw period, the period of liberalisation, partial lifting of the Iron Curtain) did influence this system (Longgrigg 1972; Rogacheva 2017). For instance, Soviet scientists and scholars were allowed to be only partly included in the international academic community – their exit visas were often delayed or denied at the last moment, especially to 'capitalist' countries (Longrigg 1972; Rogacheva 2017). During perestroika and transition period – and until the most recent times – they got access to cutting edge, most advanced and up-to-date international science, though restrictions did not go anywhere. I am writing 'they got' – and that emphasizes the agency of third parties in this process. Private networking and personal connections procured the exchange of information about grants, scholarships, funds, programmes. For instance, the majority of my respondents got to know for the first time about academic mobility possibilities via their spouses who also were scholars, research supervisors, colleagues, university administrators. The need to be included in these networks and ability to make use of them coincided with the highly standardised operations of all the scientific institutions that were placed within the official common places. And in the 1990-s this way of social interconnections was still in place, although the share of open for the broad public information grew[22] – as grew the number of opportunities.

Another feature of the late Soviet science system is that it was 'constructed' in a way that scientists did not have to constantly prove their efficiency, but they were

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[22] Aforementioned newspaper *Poisk* was one of such media. Some respondents told me that their parent or husbands, while reading a regular newspaper or checking out a youth magazine, found the advertisement for diverse sorts of grants and scholarships.

systematically paid by the state and performing their state service (Tromly 2014; Zubok 2009; Rogacheva 2017). After perestroika and formation of the Russian Federation with altered state institutions, public policies, and ideologies, members of the academic community had to adjust and look for means to shift from the Soviet model of life and work to a new, post-Soviet positioning (Yourchak 2014 [2005]; Orlova 2019).

However, already from 1971 onwards, despite the quantity of scientific workers in the USSR, there was a visible decline in science funding, and after 1985 there was no positive influx in scientific workers numbers, despite stimulating activity of the Soviet State which was still spending 2,1% GDP on science (comparable with the USA and Great Britain) (Gokhberg 2011, 8–9). After the demise of the Soviet state, in 1991, Russian Federation spent on science only 0,8% GDP (ibid), which reflected, naturally, in today's narratives about poor science, famine of scientists and their families, strategies of survival, as the disparity in funding was very visible. Notwithstanding, by 1999 numbers of research institutes grew by almost 37%, developing still within the Soviet style patterns. Nevertheless, apart from this type of research institutions, overall amount of research establishments shrank by 12%. Besides, only Moscow and St. Petersburg gained from this growth – both cities had one third of all the research institutions in Russia (ibid, 19).

After the dismissal of the USSR Russian Federation inherited 70% of its scientific 'complex' (facilities, institutes, equipment, scientists themselves) (ibid, 10). Contemporary Russian science was forged with the Soviet 'leftovers' – its science structure was built on the Soviet model of science. It was dependent on the research facilities of the Soviet institutions due to the impotence of funding any major structural improvements. According to Gokhberg (ibid), it stumbled transition to the market

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economy within the field of science and preserved its inner logic until today. Contrarywise, humanities and social sciences did not require as much funding and specialised facilities – and scholars, I presume, appeared to be more mobile and flexible.

Incentive and procedure

In her research about the scientific community of a closed 'academic town' [*akademgorodok*] of Chernogolovka, Maria Rogacheva (2017) traces the establishment of controlled restricted science system and private life of academics in their enclosed environment. One of the chapters of her book focuses on international scientific trips, restrictions, and main outcomes for scientists from Chernogolovka.

This part of her research highlights a very important issue of research journeys during late socialism. As Rogacheva establishes, people in the Soviet Union more or less knew that people in the socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe were 'happier' and richer and that people could enjoy there some 'achievements' of neighbouring capitalist states. In the 90-s researchers were not looking back proudly to their home country because of socialism, as scientists did in the 70-s, but they were observant and reflexive, able to compare the disparities in scientific infrastructure, salaries, etc. There was no fetishization of the West. However, this attitude was salient only in a third of my interviews. Indifference towards the social relations, academic environment, and material goods during the first (academic and/or touristic) trips to Europe did appear often. The majority, despite their excessive academic and touristic experience abroad, at the time of the interview still were expressing their emotionality of the very first journey. The emotional charge, apparently, was very powerful – otherwise many of them would not have 'started

travelling like crazy [about 40 trips per year]' (interview with I.). As one respondent

recalled, after a trip to a neighbouring big city, close to the place where she was

doing her Master's degree, and spending there all the money on sightseeing and

local delicacies, she 'entered the train to go back without a penny, but so happy'

(interview with Z.).

It is important to notice that perestroika and post-Soviet rhetoric of liberation

provided women with the choice not to work at all (Lissyutkina 1993), in spite of the

still remembered achievements of the Bolsheviks' liberation – a right and, later, an

obligation to work. And some women, as Lyon shows (2007), were trying to navigate

through these options. However, it was usually inconvenient or financially

unaffordable for a family with more than one kid to have only one breadwinner (a

father) (Ashwin 2000; Kiblitskaya 2000; Lyon 2007; McKinney 2020), as since

perestroika and restructuring of economic and social order the employment rates

plummeted (Ashwin and Bowers 1997, 21). As it follows from the interviewees'

narratives, scholarly occupation in the 1990s and early 2000s very often proved to be

stable for women, despite salary diminishing. There was always at least a financial

motivation to stay within academia. For instance, younger researchers (born in mid-

1960s) worked as secretaries at dissertations committees, as a public lecturer, as a

bookkeeper, taught at a few very different universities at once. However, a search for

additional sources of income and techniques of saving money (living with parents,

getting married, postponing childbirth, giving birth to a third child and receiving state

support, walking to work instead of taking bus) – implicit and explicit, conscious and

incidental – was always there. I observed that the correlation of educational capital

and social origin regulated these actions. Those with higher inherited cultural capital

(where I also include eagerness to always expand the knowledge and the number of

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'intellectual' skills) but lower economic capital were more inventive with means of augmenting their financial positions (economic capital) during perestroika and the 1990s. They tried to put to use all their capabilities and competences that they had acquired and possessed. Besides, applying for grants and going for research stays in European or American universities was very often perceived as a possibility to gain extra income. My respondents recalled that they were saving up the money from the stipend to send to the family or bring back from the academic journey.

This navigation through the local (post-Soviet) academic market had two implications: the above-described necessity to work more in order to sustain and support the family and the necessity *and* desire to work more because of the enriched field of opportunities. Going abroad via academic mobility – short- and long-term – required a lot of intellectual investment ('I was used to a lot of studying', interview with Z.), but was providing the valuable connections. Many respondents stayed friends for years with their hosts, colleagues, tutors, professors, supervisors, etc. As one respondent said, she 'stayed friends for life' with her roommate and the hosting professor (interview with N.). The other told that she spent her first academic stay abroad on establishing connections and making friends. Her stipend could buy her train tickets to different universities in Western Europe, she spoke English and 'was very active' (interview with I.).

Thus, application of one's educational capital was giving the agency and emotional incentive to a scholar. Most importantly, academic mobility was appropriated as a convenient and, apparently, pleasant way of developing one's educational capital.

In the long-term perspective, academic mobility contributed to the augmentation of the capital of scientific and of academic power. All my interviewees

hold high positions in their local, national, and local-international (meaning the very exact sub-field, specialization of the respondent) academic circles. They are directors or academic supervisors (heads of research) of research institutes, heads of teaching units, members of dissertation committees, members of the universities examinations boards. Indirectly, it is specifically the international experience that procured the academic career advancement and augmentation of the capital of scientific prestige (connections and communication with international colleagues, participation in international conferences) and intellectual renown, that became crucial for universities on the verge of the 20th and 21st centuries, when university administrators and the government launched excellence programmes for Russian higher education institutions. The goal was to induce the competences to compete with global higher education institutions. Therefore, top Russian universities today base their image and 'ideology' on international cooperation, and it is crucial for them to have (ex)researchers with such experience, especially on administrative positions[23].

Academic mobility may also represent a field on its own (the background of the transition period, as it was referred to in the introduction), where the already acquired educational and economic capital, and capital of scientific and academic power were employed in order to succeed in that field and in order to change one's dispositions in the new, post-Soviet reality.

On the one hand, because the mobility experience was serving as the ground for capitals enhancement, it is visible in today's individual narratives that it was easier

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[23] Naturally, here I describe the state of affairs before Russian invasion of Ukraine. Soon after the war was started, the rectors of practically all the higher education institutions signed a collective letter in support for the 'special military operation' (Rossijskiy Soyuz Rektorov, March 4, 2022, https://www.rsr-online.ru/news/2022-god/obrashchenie-rossiyskogo-soyuza-rektorov1/, retrieved on May 22, 2022). Many workers of the higher education protested this letter and signed a few proclamations and letters opposing the war (e.g., DOXA, March 3, 2022, https://news.doxajournal.ru/novosti/studenty-prepodavateli-vypuskniki-i-uchyonye-zapuskayut-otkrytye-pisma-protiv-vojny/, retrieved on May 22, 2022).

to adjust (and 'adjustment' is the essence of the 'transition' period) for those who entered the academia at the time of its 'decay' (end of the 1980s, not a long time before the dismissal of the Soviet Union), i.e., those who had not acquired any substantial capital of scientific or academic power but had high cultural capital (educational capital included) and were from 'intelligentsia' families (engineers, doctors, higher education professors/lecturers). They were if not more skilled, but eager to escape/change/expand their environment, even if the initial goals of choosing an academic occupation were driven by the desire to have a very good salary and relative freedom of work schedule. They were very often 'equipped' with the skills that had no use or limited use in the Soviet model of science. For instance, profound knowledge of a foreign language (English or French) for a person who studied economics or social sciences was not essential as there was nowhere to apply it. For instance, one respondent, who had to learn English in order to start going abroad, said that before she just had not needed a foreign language for her research.

On the other hand, among my respondents I distinguished a group of scholars which did not match the above-described model. By the end of the Soviet Union, they had already acquired some academic and scientific renown, received their doctoral candidate degrees, had families with children. Their educational capital was very high: they attended best schools in Moscow with advanced foreign language instruction, they studied philology – one of the most prestigious academic disciplines because it was providing foreign languages instruction – in the most prestigious university of the USSR – Moscow State. Besides that, the other social determinant guarantying the access to the positions they wanted to hold and academic success was their social origin, which defined their economic capital and, more importantly,

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inherited cultural capital. For instance, the parents (fathers and mothers[24]) of both such respondents were professors or researchers and had either doctoral or doctoral candidate degrees themselves.

There is, however, a third scenario of actions that was frequent among researchers of various academic and scientific power positions and explained with the active agency of third parties – parents, research supervisors, 'bosses' of the respondents. The formers were often not just the 'messengers' of opportunities (finding an advertisement and telling about it) but 'influencers' that had to talk their daughters, employees, students into taking the opportunity to participate in academic mobility. After the collapse of the USSR and transformation of the field of science (in the widest sense) and higher education, members of these institutions had the choice and opportunity to adjust in order to remain in their positions, and academic mobility was often a tool and a means of adjustment. For instance, one of the respondents was sent to a teaching programme because the university administrators wanted her to teach a new discipline that had just been introduced after the market reforms.

In that model educational capital, social origin, and capital of academic and scientific power also intersected, but the variations of the intersections are

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[24] Bourdieu (1988 [1984], 39) chooses as the determinant of the social origin only father's occupation. In the case of the late Soviet society, it is important to take into account the mother's occupation as additional determinant. I presume that this characteristic could gravely affect the real social position of the family. For instance, when both respondent's parents were employed in the intellectual field, they did not avoid mentioning it, while in the cases when father's occupation was more or less 'prestigious' and mother's – not as much, mother's occupation was not mentioned. Consequently, when, for instance, father of the family was a professor at a university and mother was employed in the commerce sector of the economy or was a kindergarten teacher or a house-wife, the social origin of their child would be lower than that of a daughter/son of two professors/researchers – but on the same level as the child of two engineers, of a military person and an engineer. Here I can refer to the example of my own family (by consent of both my parents). My mother's father was a military engineer and used to hold the position of a military plant head engineer. His wife, my grandmother, worked as an economist. Both graduated from main republican universities in Belarus' and Ukraine. My father's father was in the military (higher education) and his wife was a nurse (secondary vocational education) at a dental clinic. Despite the fact the both my grandfathers had higher education, it is the educational capital and occupation (hence, the habitus as well) of my grandmothers that regulated the level of families' prestige in the society.

innumerable – with one common characteristic. Academic mobility was 'forced' on them, which does not mean that they were against it or did not want to – it was, indeed, an interesting and educating experience, as all the respondents stated. In such cases, indeed, the capital of scientific power was enhanced, if the main objective of such trips was education for further application. However, some of the journeys, imposed by the administrative obligations, infused primarily the capital of academic power and, sometimes, the capital of political power.

Family and mobility

Academic mobility challenged conformed gender roles – roles of a 'good' wife and a mother were questioned, sometimes by the members of the family (usually mothers and mothers-in-law), who very often were imposing and procuring the traditional gender relations. It was described already how active the search for new opportunities challenged relations in families and led to divorces in four cases. After the break up women carried on with their active academic life, and happily remarried later (3 out of 4). Those who had children at the time when the first academic mobility opportunities arose, claimed that child-rearing limited their options – but did not restrict them completely, except for one case, where gender roles in the family were perceived as more or less flexible (e.g., a woman can have a great career in a prestigious sphere such as academia and the previous generation should ease the burden of household responsibilities) until the childbirth. Being active and mobile was permissible for a woman before she would become a mother. That is why, following this societal image, many respondents said that they were lucky to start travelling before getting married. They claimed that it was definitively easier to travel when

there were no children or husbands. Some of them tried to justify their decisions not to go somewhere by the idea of balancing the family and the job.

However, motherhood and childcare – as well as other details of private life – are apparently a semi-taboo topic for the majority of women. My respondents were very often ready to talk about how their career was made and what research they do ('I thought you would be more interested in my research', one respondent said) – but are not always eager to tell how hard or easy or fulfilling it was to care for children, husbands, elderly parents. I assume that maternity, as well as many other related to personal physiology and hygiene matters/topics, were banned from public discussion or sharing. It seemed that women had to take a breath before actually telling something about their families. Besides, lack of deeper personal connection with the interviewer (first time we saw each other) is also a factor. Although it depended on the 'compatibility' of our characters: whether they could see in me their younger selves or thought (due to the war) that we were sharing the same attitude and fearing the same. Furthermore, since my research is about academic mobility, they have guessed that I would primarily be interested in their academic work. Moreover, the perishes of the transition period, apparently, taught them to evaluate their individual 'market biographies' and become aware of their own impact and contributions. After all, they all admitted that their biographies and 'strategies of survival' were very individual, by saying, for example, 'well, you know, my case is kind of exceptional' or 'in contrast to all my colleagues' experiences, it was different for me'.

Conclusion

In his *Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* Bourdieu describes 'cultural and academic aristocracy' and its essentialistic nature, which hinders any adjustments in times of crises for 'the most privileged individuals, who remain the most attached to the former state of affairs' (1996 [1984], 24). I argue that in the case of late Soviet society belonging to the privileged 'intelligentsia' interlayer (either inheritably or by own deeds) signified the acquaintance of cultural capital transferable to the capital of academic power and capital of scientific power that both regulated the process of adjustment during the transition period.

'Transition' period is called so in this research exactly because during the 1990s and early 2000s women (in particular) were adapting or adjusting to the neoliberal economy using their 'old' mechanisms of survival, confinement, and advancement in society. The fact that female scholars were utilizing their cultural and educational capital acquired by the privileges or advantages of their social origin, educational capital and capital of academic and scientific power (acquired either before or after 1991) and trying to augment their positions within the field of academia tells that, indeed, the transition period was the transition of their social and educational determinants within the same field, where the hierarchies could have changed (not necessarily though) so they could obtain new, higher positions within the field.

In the transition period it was accepted by societal norms that women were ready to 'return' to domestic work if demanded by family needs in the economy of the transition (Lissyutkina 1993; McKinney 2020). It was more acceptable for women than for men, to curtail careers (although not necessarily quit their jobs forever) to spend more time with children and on house chores. It is explained by the

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accustomed gender images produced by the gender contract of the late Soviet society (Lyon 2007, 29; McKinney 2020). However, this observation, although proven in my research – is proven only partly. I found out that the correlation of cultural capital, social origin, and academic capital was defining female scholars' perception of their families, gender relations within families, and attitude to the balance of domestic, work, and career relations.

Traditional gender roles that still were in place – were innate and remain such in the contemporary narratives of female scholars that lived through the transition period. These gender roles were accepted and only partly contested – probably because of the abundance of visibly free options for research and academic job offers that were 'merit-based' (the perception of my respondents). So, those who were able and willing to advance professionally were seeing the opportunities that occurred as absolute fulfillment and cease or lack of gender inequality in their professional circle and in the society (both of their youth and the post-Soviet) – or proof that there has not been one. Besides, it was accepted by scholars and social scientists that there was no *gender* discrimination because in these fields my respondents did not have to feel what Nanette Funk calls 'gender alienation' (1993), as women have been highly present in that sphere. However, this 'advantage' was usually overcome by the 'glass escalator'-riding male colleagues, which has been perceived as a norm.

Implications and limitations

Although my sample of 14 interviews imposed some limitations, it has also structured the flow of the analysis. The fact that the majority of my respondents, whose circle is very random as I had interviews with those who answered my emails *and* agreed to

participate in the study, consists primarily of women from either academic or 'petite bourgeoisie' families, hints to a certain social pattern of the late Soviet society. However, further research requires a deeper prosopography level of representation – a limitation caused by the format and disposition of conversations with the interviewees and shifting of the research focus towards qualitative and not quantitative data.

My stance is that a closer look at most educated classes of the society in the case of Russian (post-Soviet) history can actually lead to revealing the functioning strategies of the whole society. Besides, I presume that the application of the Bourdieuian frame of analysis can shed some light on the issue of 'drain brain' (intellectual (im)migration) and cultural transition in the post-Soviet space. This analytical model may be used to explain how the application of educational capital defined the strategies of navigating through the changes in society and economy. Furthermore, such determinant as social origin was brought in to the scope of the research, which proved the existence of the direct ratio between the former and the way the process of adjustment went. However, the individuality of any experience was conditioned by unique intersections of educational capital (plus cultural capital) and social origin, thus preventing from constructing any universal model. I managed to categorise three possible trajectories of adjustments which were extracted only from the narratives of my 14 interviewees. Presumably, with a bigger sample and prosopography method the number and preciseness of possible scenarios would be higher.

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