Identity and Professional Trajectories

of Eastern European Immigrant Women in the United States

by

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ABSTRACT

The immigration process changes personal narratives and professional trajectories and challenges identities and individual beliefs. Yet there is currently limited research on European women immigrants' transitions in the United States. This study examines personal and professional trajectories, in the United States, of Eastern European immigrant (EEI) women with prior educational attainment in their country of origin. This study examines the following issues: personal/social learning, developmental and professional experiences prior to and post migration, and social lives after the women's arrival in the United States. The study discusses the results of in-depth interviews with eight EEI women living in Arizona and California and recounts these women's life stories, gathered through open-ended questions that focused on areas of their personal and professional lives, such as childhood, marriage, immigration, education, family relations, socio-economic status, employment, child- rearing, and other significant life events. These areas impacted the women's creation of personal beliefs and their ability to develop new identities in the United States. The study examines EEI women's identity constructions within their life trajectory narratives.

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Chapter One

Introduction

My primary interest is to understand why educated women from Europe and the former Soviet Union choose very different paths from their original goals after migration to the United States. While some women continue their education at universities in the United States intending to find high-paying jobs after graduation, many take low-paying jobs as nannies or housekeepers.

Over the past ten years, I have met dozens of young and middle-aged women who have immigrated to the United States from Europe. This is not surprising, given that immigrant and refugee populations from the former Soviet Union increased by 126 % between 1990 and 2000 alone (Camarota & McArdle, 2003). A majority of these immigrant women whom I have met have earned high levels of education, training for occupations such as medical doctors, teachers, and engineers. Surprisingly, many highly educated women have not worked in the United States since their arrival or they have taken jobs unrelated to their prior education. Some of them came to the United States after they married American citizens. Others came as refugees or with green cards. I have noticed that the level of satisfaction from emigration seems to vary based on their education and career achievement: Women who were able to use their degrees or to pursue higher degrees in the United States and have successful careers were generally happy and friendly, whereas women who were unable to use their prior education after emigration and who took entry-level jobs, unrelated to their prior education or work experiences, appeared to be unhappy with emigration. Many regretted that they emigrated or were thinking about moving back to their country of origin.

My interest in the differences between these two groups and in the rationale behind their choices led to my research into possible problems that exist within the adjustment processes related to personal and professional trajectories for educated female immigrants after migration to the United States. Some of the questions that fueled my thinking include the following: What helps and what hinders Eastern European immigrant (EEI) women from being successful and happy in their new communities in United States? What social contexts in the United States might disorient some immigrant women, thereby muddying their future personal and career choices? If disorientation occurs, what avenues might help EEI women obtain competency in their personal and professional lives in the United States? Are there common obstacles that women encounter in adapting to life in the United States? And what can I do to help at least some of these women?

Based on my experiences with EEI women and the lack of answers to these questions, I propose that there is a need to study the life paths of highly-educated EE immigrant women to better understand how they might be supported and encouraged to use their existing funds of knowledge within their new communities. My specific research on the identity and professional life trajectories of EE immigrant women in the United States begins to fill this need for research and to address the questions listed above. My research examines the paths that EEI women take after their migration to the United States and explores options for helping EEI women re-mediate their identity in the new contexts in which they find themselves.

Rationale for this Study

As mentioned previously, there is a dearth of information about what may affect highly educated immigrant women's personal and professional identities. Using a sociocultural framework, this study provides insight on individual women's construction, understanding, and meaning of their current, post-immigration identity. The primary goal of this study is to address how Eastern European immigrant women's personal and professional identities evolved over time following various paths in the process of migration. This research also examines individual women's constructions and understandings of their personal and professional identities. Stories about EEI women's personal and professional lives and identities are used to describe the evolution of these immigrant women life trajectories. By looking at how individuals who share "immigrant women" identities talk about their understanding and enactment of current personal, social, and academic roles, we can gain insight into how their personal and professional identities were constructed or re-constructed within particular locations and time restraints. This study explores the following research questions: (a) What have been the life experiences of EEI women before their migration to the United States? (b) What have been the primary challenges and motivations experienced by EEI women within their personal, professional, and social lives since their migration to the United States? (c) How would EEI women describe the next chapter of their personal, professional, and social lives?

This study furthers existing investigations on the construction of immigrant women's identities by (1) discussing some of the differing discourses around "immigrant women's" personal identity construction; (2) providing information as to how highly

educated immigrant women conceive of their roles and work; and, (3) providing insight into the women's perceptions of available, unavailable, and desirable social support at the government level, particularly for the population of highly educated immigrant women. This study also furthers our understanding of how personal narrative data can be interpreted and analyzed with emphasis on biographical and cultural influences on personal identity construction.

Much of this study's insights develop in relation to sociocultural theory. Given the heterogeneity which characterizes virtually every cultural group in this country, sociocultural theory is crucial to helping groups and individuals understand and benefit from each other as valuable members of society. This will be discussed in-depth later, when I present the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study.

Overview of the Dissertation

In the introduction, I argue that in order to better understand personal and sociocultural issues related to why or why not highly educated EEI women use their previously earned degrees while seeking further educational and career opportunities, scholars need to address their personal life experiences from a sociocultural perspective. I use Rogoff's (1995) three planes for the observation of human development or sociocultural activity as interactive and for understanding the fluid levels of EEI women's identities. The underlying assumption is that these women are in continual processes of learning and development throughout their life trajectories. I provide a detailed discussion of the sociocultural model of dynamic interaction between the individual and the environmental contexts within the three planes of interaction also proposed by Rogoff. In addition, I elaborate on how this model can contribute insight on immigrant

women's identities and the negotiation of their life trajectories. The literature review section presents a review of findings in current research and literature. I review historical stages of EE immigration to the United States and then focus my discussion on why highly educated immigrant women from EE countries warrant examination. This section also includes the research questions that guide this study.

The methodology section presents the methodology of narrative analysis and explains why this theory was a good theoretical and methodological choice for this research. In the overview of narrative theory, I emphasize the relationship between narrative and identity. After describing the participants, I explain the specific procedures for data collection and analysis. This section also details the process of participant recruitment, data collection through individual face-to-face interviews, and my identification of themes of immigrants' constructions of personal, professional, and social identity through analysis of their told personal stories. This part ends with a brief discussion of my personal biases and their impact on my negotiation of my role as the researcher.

The next two sections present my findings and discussion from the narrative analysis. I present eight individual narratives that represent each EEI woman's personal, professional, and social life trajectory. I discuss the discursive constructions of personal, professional, and social identities of EEI women in the three phases of immigrants' lives (past, present, and future). A contextual analysis of the narratives provides rich details, portraying how highly educated EEI women constitute their identity negotiations in situated activities and determining which personal and cultural resources enable these women to transcend limitations and overcome personally or socially constructed

obstacles. The findings and analyses in this section justify the use of the sociocultural model in understanding EE immigrants, especially women, and their unique life trajectories.

The last section begins with the theoretical contributions of this study to the understanding of the EE group of immigrants; it highlights the personal and social factors that influenced the women in their personal, professional, and social identity development within their life trajectories. Overall, the discussion section shows how the study's participants navigate the ongoing process of immigrant identity construction in the context of globalization and its interpretation from a situated and contextualized approach. In this chapter, I also discuss the limitations of my approach as well as some theoretical and practical implications derived from my results. I conclude with suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

One common feature of sociocultural approaches is the idea that human development and learning occurs during social interactions within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Moreover, one's lifespan development is based on participation in various sociocultural activities, embedded in specific social and cultural settings, where the more knowledgeable mentors help and guide the novice participants. As Rogoff (1994, 1995) proposed, in order to understand any level of human development, three planes must be taken into account: the personal plane (individual values, beliefs, and so on.), the intrapersonal plane (social participation), and the community plane (shared historic values and so on). In this research on highly educated EE immigrant women, I take into account their cultural values and beliefs to discover how these traditional values are mediated by the interaction of all three planes. Due to the interplay among the three planes, the cultural beliefs and values of the individual immigrant women are both similar and varied.

This research uses the three planes of development (Rogoff, 1995) to examine EEI women's narratives: (a) the life trajectories of highly educated EE immigrant women in their host country; (b) the influence of culture, language, community, and formal and informal socialization on women's everyday lives; and (c) the effect of interactional dynamics of intergroup relations and institutional structures on the women's experiences in the United States.

Sociocultural theory refers to learning that occurs through meaningful interactions in particular activities and social contexts, all of which contribute to overall human

development (Vygotsky, 1978; Weisner, 1989). Sociocultural theory recognizes that "individual and cultural processes are mutually constituting rather than defined separately from each other" (Rogoff, 2003, p.51). As researchers began to delve into human development within the global context, Rogoff's (1990, 1995) work added important conceptual contributions to sociocultural theory. For example, according to Rogoff (2003), an individual's development needs to be looked at as a cultural process in which individuals are participants in the practices of their cultural communities. As Rogoff (1995) wrote,

> The use of "activity" or "event" as the unit of analysis-- with active and dynamic contributions from individuals, their social partners, and historical traditions and materials and their transformations - allows a reformulation of the relation between the individual and the social and cultural environments in which each is inherently involved in the others' definition. None exists separately. (p.139-140)

Therefore, it is essential that we understand immigrant women's unique life experiences, including educational level, immigration history, socioeconomic status, previous work experiences, personal and family beliefs and values (Fouad et al, 2007; Heppner & Fu, 2010). Rogoff (1995) also emphasizes that planes of focus are not "separate or as hierarchical," but rather, "simply involving different grains of focus with the whole sociocultural activity" (p. 141). She continues,

> To understand each requires the involvement of the others. Distinguishing them serves the function of clarifying the plane of focus that may be chosen for one or another discussion of processes in the whole activity, holding the other planes of focus in the background but not separated. (p. 141)

In addition to sociocultural theory, multicultural feminist theory provides an important lens for understanding EEI women because it argues that a woman is defined by her status in society based on integrated multiple aspects (e.g., education, social background, appearance, sexual desires, age, marital status, and so on.). As hooks (1990) explains, women can be the victims of "multiple jeopardy," because many are embedded in racial, ethnic, and class conflicts.

This multiple jeopardy and different countries' contrasting social models are important to consider in relation to EEI women. For example, the United States lacks social protections in many of its policies that govern work-family balance. This complicates women's pursuit for equal citizenship. In contrast, the European social model was created with beneficial universality and maternal policies not just for women but for entire families. As Stratigaki (2004) explains,

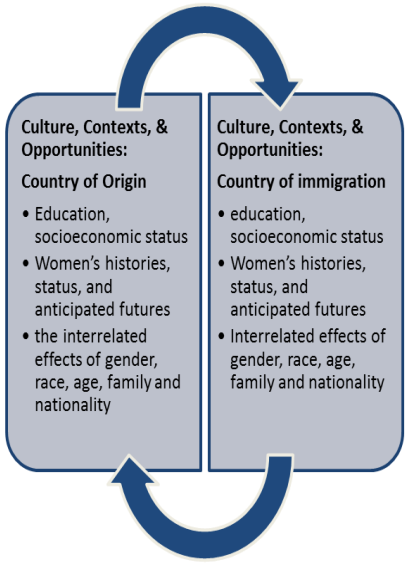
> European states still vary enormously in the degree to which work-family balance means helping women balance "their" responsibilities (as in Germany) or encouraging a better balance between women and men in care work and employment (as in Sweden), . . . the EU itself has more willingly embraced the former than the latter goal. (as cited in Ferree, 2009, p.284)

Ferree (2009) also notes,

> Thus the framing of "rights" formed by class-centered meanings of social citizenship dominated in Europe, but race-centered attributions of personal inferiority to legitimate exclusions from "rights" were historically central to the U.S. (p. 9)

Feminist theory perspectives such as these focus on the promotion of women's rights and interests while aiming to understand and create gender equality and power relations in various social and personal contexts. On the basis of sociocultural and feminist theory, I hope that I have presented the views and experiences of these immigrant women while outlining each participant's past and present social, cultural, and historical contexts.

Figure 1. Constructing immigrant women's identities and professional accomplishments



Based on Rogoff's (1995, 2000, 2003) work and my theoretical lens, I offer the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1. As Figure 1 illustrates, I suggest that culture, contexts, and opportunities are afforded in two spaces, in countries of origin and in countries of immigration. In both spaces, women's trajectories are shaped by their social, cultural, economical, and geographical contexts and by historical events and internal and

external factors. I elaborate on these ideas in the literature review and return to these spaces in the design of my study.

In addition, in my data analysis I use Clandinin and Connely's (1998, 2000) concept of narrative inquiry among the following three commonplaces: temporality (inquiries regarding the past, present, and future of people and things under study), sociality (inquiries attending to both personal and social conditions), and place (the location of inquiry and events).

Chapter Three

Literature Review

Eastern European Migration

Often when people from foreign countries talk about the United States, it is perceived and believed to be the land of many opportunities (Miller at el., 2006; Remennick, 2007; Yakushko, 2006, 2007). So it is no surprise that many people consider migration to the United States as an opportunity to start a new life. Since the breakup of the former Soviet Union in 1991, approximately 350,000 immigrants from various ethnic groups (such as Jews, Russians, Ukrainian) have entered the United States (Remennick, 2007).

The fall of the Soviet Union and communist regimes in the early nineties resulted in increased emigration from Eastern Europe to the United States. However, EE emigration goes back as early as 1880 and accounts for the majority of the Jewish population in the United States. Early immigrants were either inspired by the entrepreneurial opportunities or were Jewish groups, fleeing from political injustices, who sought refugee status. The first big emigration from Eastern Europe took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, before World War I. The second phase took place after the Russian Revolution and Civil War of 1917-1920. The emigration period of 1880-1928, brought about 1,749,000 Jewish people to the United States (Sarna and Golden, 2000). The third phase happened after World War II, when approximately 50,000 people emigrated from Eastern Europe to the United States. The fourth phase happened as a side effect of the fall of the Soviet Union in 1986 (Orleck, 1999).

In contrast to earlier waves of immigration, many of the EE immigrants of the 1990s and 2000s are well educated, particularly in technical and scientific fields. Despite ethnic differences and/or immigrant status (workers, refugees, and immigrants), the majority of these immigrants also share similar cultural values and beliefs. The immigrant women from EE share similar values, united by the same language and beliefs as a result of receiving centralized education during the Soviet Union from 1922 to1991 (Pavlenko, 2013). According to Gold (2007) and Robila (2007), the immigrants from Eastern Europe have on average higher educational backgrounds than other groups of immigrants. Many of the immigrants from Eastern Europe are searching for economic and social opportunities that they cannot find at their place of birth (Ispa-Landa, 2007).

Currently, the U.S. immigration literature is concentrated around underprivileged and visibly different immigrants, specifically predominantly non-white ethnic minorities (Latino, Asian, African-American, and so on). Much more research is needed to understand the issues that white immigrant women experience (Birman, Trickett, Bushanan, 2005; Remennick, 2009). When research has focused on EE women, it has primarily studied women who identify themselves as Jewish (Birman at el., 2002; Birman & Trickett, 2001; Reminnick, 2007; Sinacore, Mikhail, Kassan, & Lerner, 2009). Studies on the various other ethnic groups who have migrated from EE are therefore warranted. This study examines EE immigrant women from various ethnic groups (Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, et al.) and their career adaptation patterns within the host society. This research also examines the existence of any differences among EE women of Jewish and non-Jewish decent after their migration to the United States.

Many immigrant women encounter multiple obstacles in the job market in the United States (Marsella & Ring, 2003; Preston & Man, 1999). EE women bring to the work force work experience from their prior professional work settings and higher levels of educational attainment in the former Soviet Union countries (Kishinevsky, 2004; Remennick, 2007). Although Gold (2003) found that some of the women made a successful transition into United States society, most research finds that immigrant women of any origin, upon migration, encounter employers who do not recognize their qualifications. Therefore, immigrant women must resort to taking low-paying jobs (Kadkhoda, 2002; Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Remennick, 2003). Ritsner at el. (2001) found that social prejudices against immigrant women, coupled with a personal sense of loss of social and professional status in their job or educational fields, also influence immigrants' self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Research shows that the majority of immigrants struggle with career transitions, career development, and possible pursuit of education (Remennick, 2007; Yakushko, 2006). Women who migrate from former Soviet Union countries also undergo multiple economic and cultural transitions, as these educated females realize that they no longer have universal employment and cannot continue their former career trajectories (Remennick, 2007; Zhou, 2000). According to Foner (2001), immigrant women often must resort to different types of work at the lowest levels, in contrast with their prior work and education experiences. As immigrants try to prioritize the financial pressure to work with the desire of long-lasting career success, the possibility of obtaining further education may be one way to reach their career goals (Yakushko, 2006). The decision to migrate can play a significant role in the process of adaptation and acculturation.

Numbers of immigrant women are left struggling with conflicting sets of principles, norms, and beliefs between their country of origin and the United States, which may challenge their personal identities. Thus, immigrant women must deal with relocating transitions and adjustment along with unpredictable and changing social and workforce opportunities. Furthermore, immigrant women face hard adjustments as they struggle to balance work and family responsibilities with available economic opportunities (Read, 2004; Remennick, 2005). Previous research in Canada on Chinese immigrant women (Salaff & Greve, 2004) and Asian, Eastern/Western European, and North American immigrant women (Koert, Borgen, Amundson, 2011) emphasizes the importance of social support (Waters, 2002; Goodman et al., 2006) as immigrant women adjust and adapt to these personal and social matters (Salaff & Greve, 2004). Also, opportunities for growth and self-development in their new country need to be provided to immigrant women to help them in their efforts to re-establish careers through further education while meeting their families' needs at a level that is comfortable for them.

Immigration and Identity

Immigration processes contribute to a degree of confusion among most people, and the resulting uncertainty pushes people to reevaluate, maintain, or expand their cultural values and to re-work their identities (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Van Hear, 1998). According to Hall (1996), identities are "never singular but [are] multiply constructed" (p. 4); identities constantly change, adapt, and transform. Psychological and cognitive changes during immigration processes put more pressure on the ideology and voice of personal beliefs. In Hall's (1992) words, "We are confronted by a range of different identities, each appealing to us, or rather to different parts of ourselves, from

which it seems possible to choose" (p.303). This results in "cultures of hybridity," in which identities are subject to historical and political representations and are therefore open to the processes of adaptation and change (Hall, 1992, 1996). Within this perspective, immigrants are afforded the capability of becoming the agents of their own new, adjusted identity.

Some researchers argue that having a clear cultural identity, or a clear understanding of cultural group values, beliefs, and norms, helps to create a more defined personal identity (Hammack, 2008; Schwartz, Zamboanga & Weisskirch, 2008). Maintaining one's native culture can support generational heritage or can palliate psychological distress (Kitayama & Cohen, 2007; Mirsky, Baron- Draiman, & Kedem, 2002). Cultural heritage can contribute to a person's sense of identity and continuity, providing a connection within one's past through the present and into the future. Therefore, as Yakushko and Chronister (2005) propose, more accessible ways and programs within immediate and extended communities must be found to incorporate cultural, ethnic, and generational resources to support immigrant women as they negotiate and adapt during the process of identity making.

Ideally, immigrants could integrate into their new environment without sacrificing their cultural heritage and could redefine themselves without forgetting their origins. However, it is often impossible to make an unnoticed transition and blending of cultures in a short period of time, or it may be difficult to extend far beyond the confines of the new environment. As Bruner (1991) wrote, "Self-making is powerfully affected not only by your own interpretations of yourself, but by the interpretations others offer of your version" (p. 76). Naturally, immigrants are eager to know what other people think of

them and how can they enact the right sort of identity that would help them find a meaningful place in the new society.

Yet personal identity can be used as a tool for mediation when immigrant women start to explore various ways of acceptance and self-education in their attempts to preserve or restore their lives. As Hewitt (1997) explains,

> A sense of self built up over time as a person embarks on and pursues projects or goals that are not thought of as those of a community, but as a property of the person. Personal identity thus emphasizes a sense of individual anatomy rather than of communal involvement. (p.93)

Many immigrants have to evaluate their personal hopes and goals and align their abilities with the afforded opportunities in the new country. It is a very slippery line for immigrants to stay true to their individual beliefs and not to completely emerge into a current community shadow. Therefore, many highly educated women view their profession and self-actualization as important parts of their identity (Remennick, 2007).

Gidden (1991) argued that "self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or, even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. In other words, it is the self reflexively understood by the person as his or her biography" (p. 53). Although personal identity can help immigrant women mediate their new environments, globalization and immigration processes can intensify self-evaluation beyond the reach of traditional structures and can thus create a sense of uncertainty (Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Also, as Hermans (1996, 2001, 2002) observed in his concept of the "dialogical self," one's new life circumstances often trigger a multivoiced and dialogical communication within oneself. Hermans (1996, 2001) conceptualized that the "dialogical self" is the

psychological ability of the human mind to maintain an internal dialog in correspondence to the external context. From this perspective, a person's *I* can take opposite sides in discussion of various concepts, interacting together within personal or local cultures and environments. The dialogical self may struggle to secure a stable position within multiple voices of self-preservation, of personal dignity, and of ideology without sacrificing future possibilities in the new country.

The immigration process changes a person's life narrative and trajectories for the future (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). Multicultural and multilingual environments can influence, change, and contribute to a person's multi-constructed identity. Dien (1983, 2000) stated that self-identity development is a lifelong process that people may experience and then are able to conceptualize from the experience. Each culture creates appropriate social meanings and norms that are codependent on contingent variables of one's personal and social perceptions.

Some researchers have used the adaptation process to analyze changes in the lives of immigrants. Adaptation process refers to the process of coping with and negotiating the varied demands of important social and personal contexts, or "microsystems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swindle & Moos, 1992). Rogoff (2003) views activities and events as important units of analysis, through which researchers can see intertwined relationships between individuals and their social and cultural environments. Microsystems include not only the psychological state, but also families and peer and other social settings, comprised of both immigrant and nonimmigrant groups (Birman et al., 2002). Each of these life aspects may provide different adaptive support systems, such as successful supportive relationships, successful coping strategies, and so on. The

highly skilled immigrant women in this study face various problems of occupational re-adjustment and struggles with continuing their educational goals within the new society.

Through analysis of immigrant women's narratives, including descriptions of their academic learning and work experiences, De Silva (2010) and Skachkova (2000) described and revealed the barriers, concerns, discrimination, multiple tryouts, failures, and successes that female educators and employees faced. Personal oral narratives gave some insights into power relationships, mentoring opportunities or lack thereof, and racial and sexual harassment. These are but a few of the contextual factors that emerge as relevant to immigrant women's perceptions of themselves.

In accordance with relational-cultural theory (Jordan, Walker & Hartling, 2004), culture, power, and social connection all play important roles in the development of an immigrant woman's sense of identity. Migration status is intertwined with culture, power, and social networks. The different types of migration status, including immigrant, migrant, and refugee, have created new challenges within social, educational, and immigrant communities in the United States. During the past few decades, an increasing number of individuals are identifying with more than one culture, which complicates the issue of how people define themselves and their places in current society (Yakushko, 2008).

It is important to emphasize that people should offer more respect and understanding for the different cultures and beliefs that individuals hold and bring to the United States. Immigrants can provide many benefits to their host countries, including economic contributions, intercultural learning and diversity, and enlightenment of global issues (Andrade, 2006; Ataca & Berry, 2002; Steir, 2003). Due to findings that

emphasize the many dimensions involved in the adaption process, many of which I will discuss at length later in this literature review, I chose to study women's identities and their sociocultural upbringing throughout this constant dynamic process of change and reinvention. This focus allows for an individualistic approach in which immigrant women are social/active agents (Brah, 2000) who make their own history by overcoming imposed social limitations.

Identity development is also closely related to self-concept and cannot be separated from choice of occupations (Super, 1981; Super, 1990). The majority of people define themselves, as well as others, based on their career identity because it incorporates their abilities, interests, values, history, and aspirations (Super, 1990; Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). Many people see their career self-concept as the "possession of a clear and stable picture of one's goals, interests, and talent" (Holland, 1985, p. 5), and as a multi-dimensional construct of "the cognitive representation of the self derived from past career experiences, beliefs, values, attributes and motives that define the individual in terms of their career" (Slay, 2006, p. 22).

The process of facilitating dialogical exchanges within a person's autobiographical narrative about his or her sense of identity allows for re-creation and analysis that can lead to new personal career trajectories (Bruner, 1990; McIlveen & Patton, 2006; Pasupathi, 2001). For example, a woman's cultural background and the realities associated with her immigration can give a woman's identity various dimensions for her future career choices and for the education she sees as a correlation to her chosen career path (McIlveen & Patton, 2007).

In summary, immigrants participate in the construction of their perceived social reality and identity through an ongoing process, based on their interpretations and knowledge. Because the constantly changing nature of social interactions is intensified in the immigration process, an immigrant's identity and participation in society must be constantly maintained and re-affirmed in order to "fit in" in the new society. Immigrant women have to navigate and balance the integration process, which Remennick (2007) described as "the structural aspect of immigration inclusion (employment, functional social networks, participation in host social institutions)" (p. 71) and the acculturation process, which deals with cultural aspects, "including language shift, informal social networks, and cultural consumption" (p. 71). As Callero (2003) wrote,

> Finally, the self that is socially constructed is never a bounded quality of the individual or a simple expression of psychological characteristics; it is a fundamentally social phenomenon, where concepts, images, and understandings are deeply determined by relations of power. Where these principles are ignored or rejected, the self is often conceptualized as a vessel for storing all the particulars of the person. (p. 127)

Eastern European Women and Gender Expectations and Limitations

Women from the former Soviet Union countries had a long-established history of specific gender expectations. The cultural perception of a woman's role was proudly demonstrated within family and workplace environments (Remennick, 2013). The core of a woman's identity was the perceived domestic role of loving wife and mother. Women were responsible for managing family budgets, decision-making, and completing all of the required house choirs (cooking, cleaning, and so on). These important prerequisites of

being a woman resulted in “double workload” in women’s daily lives (Mamonova, 1984, 1989). Although men and women received equal higher education, a majority of women were able to only climb to the middle of the corporate ladder (Einhorn, 1993; Remennick, 2007). With the fall of the Soviet Union during the 1990s, a majority of women were forced to assume the complete breadwinning role in the family as their perceived lifelong struggles made them more able to withstand the unstable micro-economy (Kiblitskaya, 2000). Women who were living in the former Soviet Union countries were taking several part-time jobs in order to support their immediate and extended families as well as dealing with their male partners, some of whom displayed aggressive behavior due to their lack of employment (Ashwin, 2002).

Overall, Eastern European women were constantly overworked and underappreciated, and following economic changes and loss of universal employment in the 1990s-2000s, many women also became responsible for their family’s income and sought to migrate (Ashwin, 2002; Kibitskaya, 2000).

Gender expectations and limitations were, in turn, affected by women’s immigration to the United States. Previous research shows that immigrant women experience varied social and gender role possibilities in Western societies that may allow them greater occupational and educational opportunities and living standards (Remennick, 2007; Wang & Jordaehe, Sangalang, 2005). But these possibilities may also increase the tension of family relations, and the overall cultural impact on their self-esteem and identities may create great psychological distress, particularly for female immigrants (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Espin, 2000; Farr & Wilson-Figueroa, 1997; Furnham & Sheikh, 1993; Munet-Vilaro, Folkman, & Gregorich, 1999; Remennick, 2005).

In addition, research shows that the coping process among immigrants varies based on gender. Women tend to have a harder time managing their feelings and dealing with homesickness and lack of social and family support, all of which can contribute to depression (Hurh & Kim, 1990; Vega et al., 1991). Walsh & Horenczyk's (2001) qualitative research on of the narratives of both immigrant women and men show women's difficulties with leaving family and friends and with forming new relationships in pursuit of successful self re-establishment in their new countries. As Rumbaut (1991) wrote, "Migration can produce profound psychological distress among the most motivated and well prepared individuals, and even in most receptive circumstances" (p. 56). Looking deeper into the available research on counseling strategies, mental health, adaptation and psychological distress of Latino and Asian immigrants, Yakushko & Cronister (2005) analyzed data by using an ecological model to outline various counseling strategies and interventions that would be helpful particularly to Latino immigrant population. Moreover, reviewed research findings were analyzed across multiple levels of ecological model (Yakushko & Cronister, 2005).

Based on the available research data for Mexican immigrants, women can experience the grief of multiple losses (such as family, friends, work, and so on) and can feel loneliness and partial or full loss of their identity and self-esteem (Cole, Espín & Rothblum, 1992; Espin, 1997, 1999; Yakushko & Cronister, 2005). Moreover, Latino immigrant women are viewed as keepers and transmitters of their cultural heritage (Espin, 1999; Yakushko & Cronister, 2005). Stress and inability to cope with the relocation (NCRW, 1995) may trigger more experiences of domestic violence among immigrant women. Female immigrants' struggles with coping and with altered gender

expectations again point to the need for social and relational awareness, within an immigrant's adopted country, for female immigrant's socialization and identity development.

A Brief History of Education, Careers, and the Workforce in the Former Soviet Union

The former Soviet Union was formed after the socialist revolution of 1917 and included what are now known as the following 15 countries: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Tadjikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kirgistan, Azerbadjan, Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. The main post-revolutionary ideas were to provide equal work opportunities, salary, social status, and access to education, and to establish the cultural, military, and political independence of the newfound union (Goldman, 2003). The socialist political structure's main focus was average working-class people, while the aristocrats and wealthy intelligentsia were suppressed by Joseph Stalin's propaganda and repressive policies from the 1920s to the 1950s (Getty, 2005; Goldman, 2003). In the former Soviet Union, the educational and economic systems only approved career choices in scientific education and occupations in factory or farming sectors, which supported the goals of the socialist political system (Kramer, 2003). In the 1980s and the early 1990s, the Soviet Union's economic systems began to malfunction, which resulted in the 1991 revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Blejer, Calvo, Coricelli, & Gelb, 1993; Kramer, 2003).

Today, all of the former Soviet Union countries encounter various degrees of irregular and contingent economic instability as a result of unemployment, poverty, and wide wage gaps (Blejer, Calvo, Coricelli & Gelb, 1993; Broadman, 2004; Broadman,

2005; Linn, 2004). Due to the economic instability, government structural changes, unstable jobs, privatization of businesses, and growing differences between urban and rural areas, women and elderly workers constitute a majority of the unemployed (Rutkowski & Scarpetta, 2005; Yakushko & Sokolova, 2010).

During the Soviet Union period, an individual's career trajectories were profoundly influenced by the ideologies of parents, schools, available social structures, and family friends (Skorikov & Vondracek, 1993; Teckenberg, 1989; Yost & Lucas, 2002). During that time there were no great differences in the pay structure among teachers, engineers, factory workers, and farmers (Linn, 2004). Rather, the advantage of higher education was viewed as an aspect of intellectual assets and different "white-collar verses blue-collar" job opportunities (Skorikov & Vondracek, 1993). The white-collar positions were office jobs in government and education sectors, while blue-color jobs were the manual services. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, people tried to find employment within the government, where they felt financially secure, or in the food sector, where they had access to products (Busygin, 1991; Kramer, 2003). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, all educational system providers, including teachers and professors, have only periodically been paid for their work (Zabrodin & Watts, 2003). With this turbulence and daily uncertainty, people view a career as a "mechanism of survival in occupational and social structures" (Yakushko, 2007, p. 305).

A Review of the History of Higher Education in the Former Soviet Union

In the Soviet Union, all of the republics had centralized and state-controlled educational systems. Until 1990, the educational systems in all of the socialist countries were almost identical and each reflected the ideologies of Soviet policies. For admission

to the university, the Soviet Union required students to take subject-specific written and oral examinations, which concentrated on rote learning, reproduction of prepared essays and the retelling of memorized texts (Zawacki-Richter & Kourotchkina, 2012).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the educational system underwent considerable changes, resulting from dramatic reductions in government budgets, declining academic standards, and institutional corruption. For the past 20 years, the Russian higher education system has experienced continuous reformation, which is reflected in the way new forms of higher education have been developed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of independent countries, the convergence of education systems towards the "world standards" began (Zawacki-Richter & Kourotchkina, 2012). In 1999, Ministers of Education from 29 European countries (including nine from former Soviet Republics) signed the Bologna Declaration, which created a unified system across universities, with two comparable degrees: bachelor and master (Zawacki-Richter & Kourotchkina, 2012). The new educational system is required to have the same organization of curriculum and structure of education (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000) and to be administrated by the Council of Europe, World Bank, USAID, and UN organizations. The establishment of a new, unified educational system was important to the "globalization," "democratization," and "Europeanization" movements for post-socialism countries (Lawn & Lingard, 2002; Yuryeva, 2011). By 2006, 45 European countries were involved in European educational reform. The American Council for International Education supported this movement. The Ukraine signed the Bologna Declaration in 2005 (Yuryeva, 2011). However, depending on the current status of each participating country within the European Union, or post-Soviet

educational system, there are still various stages of development and implementation (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2004; Silova & Magno, 2004).

Post-Soviet countries look at higher education as an extremely valuable source of social and professional recognition. This is reflected in the growth of university courses and institutions and in university enrollment. During the late 1980s the universities began to introduce new courses in their curricula. At the beginning of the 1990s, the first private higher education institutions were founded. By 2010, the Russian Federation alone included 1,114 higher education institutions, of which 662 were state-owned and 452 independently operated (Zawacki-Richter & Kourotchkina, 2012). In the Ukraine in 2011, 99.7% of adults and 99.8% of youth were literate, and the transition rate from primary (elementary/middle school) to secondary (high school) was 100% (UNESCO, 2011). Russia's total population in 2009 was 141.9 million people, with 7.513 million students, 58% of whom were female (Zawacki-Richter & Kourotchkina, 2012).

Gender equity in education enrollment is also high in the Ukraine. In 2011, from the total Ukrainian population of 45.190 million people, 85% of girls and 85% of boys were enrolled in secondary school (UNESCO, 2011). In 2011, 88% of Ukrainian girls and 75% of Ukrainian boys were in tertiary (university) school. In primary school in the Ukraine, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) is 1.00, in secondary school, the GPI is 0.94, and in higher education, the GPI is 1.2 (UNICEF, 2008). The GPI reflects female's access to education through various levels of the educational system.

These statistics make the former Soviet Union countries comparable to countries worldwide in the emphasis placed on education, particularly for women. According to UNICEF's 2008 data, the gross enrollment ratio (GER) in tertiary education for women

was at least one quarter above than for men in these regions: North America and Western Europe (GPI of 1.24), Central and Eastern Europe (GPI of 1.22), and Latin America and the Caribbean (GPI of 1.20) (UNICEF, 2010). This shows that females are more likely to finish secondary education and to pursue higher education. In comparison with the United States, which has 129 female students for every 100 male students, the Russian Federation has 126 female students for every 100 male students (Chien, UNICEF, 2012).

A Brief Review of Personal, Social, and Career Changes Due to Immigration

Immigration is a very disruptive chain of events in an individual's life cycle. Individuals usually decide to immigrate based on their desire for a better quality of life. Yet many immigrants, particularly those forced to migrate suddenly, often discover that the coping process of multiple unplanned losses may create additional psychological distress during resettlement (De Silva, 2010). The implications of immigration compromise an individual's "family networks, their educational and employment trajectories, and their financial and social resources" (De Silva, 2010, p. 27). An immigrant's overall life transition and resettlement is greatly influenced by positive personal and professional transitions within the new host society.

Employment changes. Research shows that immigrants' adjustment to a host society depends on satisfactory employment (Majka & Mullan, 1992; Weiner, 1996). Success in finding satisfactory work contributes to immigrants' sense that they are valued by their host society, which therefore validates their hope for a successful future (De Silva, 2010; Lee & Westwood, 1996).

Although an estimated 6.1 million immigrants in the United States in 2006 had earned bachelor's degrees or higher prior to their migration, only one of every five found

employment in qualified and skilled occupations (Batalova, Fix & Creticos, 2008). Both men and women who do find employment in skilled occupations often find that they are overqualified for their jobs, but due to higher competition, they receive lower market earnings (Batalova et al., 2008; Chiswick & Miller, 2008; Czedo, 2008; Reitz, 2007). Other educated immigrants have to search for jobs in manual skills occupations or suddenly find themselves unemployed because of "skill incapability, poor command of the host language, and market saturation in many professions" (Remennick, 2007, p. 329). Additional factors contributing to immigrants' unemployment include negative stereotypes, difficulties evaluating foreign credentials, and restrictions among professional accreditation systems (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Man, 2004; Remennick et al., 2008).

Moreover, immigrants are often unprepared to face the structure of the job market in the United States (Segal & Mayadas, 2005). For example, Eastern European immigrants and refugees from the former Soviet Union were accustomed to being assigned jobs within the government and educational system. Since the fall of Soviet Union, graduates relied on their family connections to secure employment. Upon immigrating to the United States, they are therefore often unfamiliar with typical job search methods, resume writing, and interview processes (Bemak & Chung, 2002; Yakushko, 2007).

Unemployment often causes "emotional, psychological and behavioral corollaries of disrupted or confused meaning, identity, affiliation, and negative feelings of self-esteem" (Herr & Gramer, 1996, p.94) in addition to other personal and social changes due to migration. Findings show that the inability to achieve occupational successes may

lead to problems in family relationships, excessive alcohol consumption, depression, loss of status, and sorrow in immigrants (Bhattacharya, 2008; Kieselbach & Lunser, 1990). Therefore, immigrants view finding employment as their first priority for achieving financial stability and for regaining the lost structure and balance in their lives (Yost & Lucas, 2002).

Educational choices. Once immigrants realize their current employment choices, they may try to look for other ways to obtain better jobs. One such way is to look for free or low-fee educational opportunities. These educational opportunities may provide immigrants with necessary certificates and degrees to further pursue their career dreams.[1] Additionally, immigrants need to be encouraged to receive formal English language instruction through available community or educational settings to gain basic language proficiency required by the majority of employers (Yakushko, et. al., 2008).

However, depending on their family or personal economic situation, they may feel uncertain or unable to pursue their desire for further education or re-qualification (Remennick, 2013; Yakushko et al., 2008). Research shows that immigrant women make decisions about future employment based on the following factors: their current age and the age at which they migrated, their English language proficiency, family consequences,

[1] Research findings show that Ukrainian women in particular emphasize the role of education as a necessary asset for future career development, often because they are aware of gender differences within the workforce and desire to combat these differences (Walsh & Heppner, 2006; Yakushko & Sokolova, 2010).

previous work experiences, and possible financial support from their partner (Remennick, 2007).

Language acquisition. Language skills and English language acquisition are often seen as a positive sign of adjustment and integration, particularly for an immigrant's employment searches and career development. Previous research notes that Eastern European immigrant women may experience higher levels of depression due to insufficient English language proficiency (Miller & Chandler, 2002; Miller et al., 2006). Many employers look at an immigrant's language skills as one of the main factors in the hiring process or in career growth evaluation (Center for Workforce Success, 2007).

Some employers may have a prejudice against foreign accents at their workplaces, which consciously sabotages an immigrant's attempt to find and establish himself or herself (Remennick, 2013; Yakushko et al., 2008). It is important to realize that immigrants and refugees may encounter many judgmental and embarrassing situations during their journey to social reestablishment in their new society (Yakushko, 2008). It is even harder for older generations of immigrants to try to soften their accent. Despite possible prejudice, an immigrant's accent can be viewed by employers and by immigrants themselves as a constant reminder of these individuals' strength, courage, and intelligence in learning a new language and in adapting to a new life (Yakushko, 2008).

Cultural identity. Once women immigrate, they are faced with the dilemma and confusion of navigating between the social world of family, as they know it, and the Western social world found in the United States. The demands upon women to stay connected to their family may be hard for many to balance with obligations to "new" workforce systems. These experiences can bring mixed expressions of cultural identity in

women. Some immigrant women respond to these demands by abandoning the cultural identity that they brought with them.

Yet abandonment of cultural identity, traditions, and values may be related to higher levels of depression experienced by immigrants (Oh et al., 2002). For example, previous research shows that when immigrant women from the former Soviet Union had less social alienation during and after migration, they experienced lower psychological distresses (Miller et al., 2006). Also, the voluntary or involuntary choice of cultural disconnection may result in isolation from an immigrant's community and possible loss of networking opportunities and support (Segal & Mayadas, 2005).

Although immigrants benefit from maintaining their cultural identities, it is also important for them to understand the new cultural and social norms in order to further their personal and career development in their new social setting (Yakushko et. al., 2008). Because of the importance of mainstream culture to career advancement, immigrants usually try to blend in with the mainstream culture in workplace environments, while continuing to maintain their own cultural values. This balancing act exerts significant pressure on an individual's acculturation process (Yakushko et. al., 2008).

In order to have a relatively stress-free transition within their personal and professional life trajectories, immigrants may engage in a bicultural acculturation process (González et al., 2001; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980; Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987). The bicultural acculturation process can aid immigrants in obtaining new cultural knowledge while continuing to value their cultural identities and customs and their experiences and skills accrued prior to migration. New cultural knowledge is essential for surviving and thriving personally and professionally in their new environments. All

immigrants can benefit from knowing and understanding cultural customs and attitudes, rules and procedures within employment and educational systems, various aspects of job market qualifications, evolving aspects of technological demands, and social norms and relations (Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Yakushko, 2006).

Chapter Four

Methodology

This study focuses on understanding the personal journey of EE highly educated immigrant women in the United States. The methodology for this study is a combination of sociocultural methods and a narrative methodology approach to explore the inherent meanings of an individual's identity. This study uses narrative interviews in order to capture all three planes of identity development. In this chapter, I will give an explanation and rationale for using narrative inquiry in general, I will discuss the relationship between narrative and inquiry, I will explain narrative inquiry in relation to this particular study, and I will describe the different interviews involved in the narrative inquiry methodology.

Adopting a Narrative Methodology for the Sociocultural Study of EE Immigrant Women

An explanation of and rationale for narrative inquiry. A narrative is comprised of a series of stories in response to interview queries. Through these narratives, a person comes to understand and express his or her life experiences (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Bruner, 1990). Narrative interviews are open-ended inquiries that allow the interviewer to follow participants as they raise the issues that they want to discuss. These interviews also lead to additional questions based on the interviewee's narrative (Bauer, 1996).

Based on Bruner's (1990, 1996) notion of cultural psychology, interviewers use narratives to examine how people make meaning of their lives and simultaneously explore constructions of identity. From a sociocultural perspective (Rogoff, 2000), these narratives are embedded in the narrator's culture, evolving within their past, present, and

future experiences, and intertwined in their identities of gender, race, ethnicity, and personal and professional lives. The narratives disclose the meanings of individual experiences and have the power to shape and maintain an individual's identity (McAdams, 1985; Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

Narrative inquiries have three dimensions: (1) the personal and social interaction (sociality), (2) past, present, and future of narrative continuity (temporality), and (3) place (situation) (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). These dimensions can be studied by listening, observing, writing, and interpreting a person's narratives. It is important for researchers to be attentive to situating field texts within these three dimensions of narrative inquiry spaces (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

In narrative inquiry research, participants welcome researchers by telling their stories. By engaging with participants, researchers have an opportunity to walk in the midst of their stories. The field texts may include some of the following: field notes, photographs, transcripts of conversations, recording, and videotapes. The chosen field texts are then placed within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Personal experiences then take a narrative form as they are re-told (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Thus, the use of narrative methodology is a truthful and respectful collaboration between researcher and participants, in a place or series of places, as a form of social interaction over time. An interviewer has the opportunity to look into another person's life, while the interviewee has an opportunity to tell, relive, and retell the stories of the experiences that made up their personal and social lives.

The relationship between narrative and identity. Narrative and identity are closely connected. This conceptual link between narrative and identity (Gidden, 1991)

can be seen as individuals use stories to render meaning to their experiences and actions that may prevent or help them negotiate identity crises (e.g., due to immigration). There are several advantages to using narrative to study identity. First, the narrative approach is recognized as "the privileged locus" for studying identity (De Fina, 2003; Katriel, 2008) because it can provide a sequence of events and their evolution in the identity construction process. Second, it provides the storyteller with the ability to negotiate the "dialogical self" (Bakhtin, 1973; Herman, 1996; Herman et al., 2001) by situating the self and others in particular contexts. The "dialogical self" allows the mind to create an extended landscape where one's *I* position can move freely from one spatial position to another in a continuous dialog as a reflection of internal and external contexts (Herman, 1996; Herman et al., 2001). By using narratives within a person's dialogical self, researchers seek to discover the immigrant women's identity formations through their personal and social experiences as they mutually inform and construct each other. As McAdams (1988) said,

> It is an individual's story, which has the power to tie together past, present and future in his or her life. It is a story which is able to provide unity and purpose. Identity stability is the longitudinal consistency in the life story. Identity transformation – identity crisis, identity change – is story revision. (p. 18)

The strength of narratives lies in their inherent meanings and in their power to shape and maintain an individual's identity. The relationship between women's psychological development and their culture is further supported by Brown and Gilligan's (1992) findings that "an inner sense of connection with others is a central

organizational feature of women's development and that psychological crisis in women's lives stem from disconnections" (p.3).

Looking at the significant events over a woman's lifespan helps researchers uncover different identity-developmental perceptions, stages, and convergence (Deegan, 2003; Sigelman & Shaffer, 1998) that shape the overall trajectory of an EEI woman's life. For EEI women, life narratives are particularly important because they represent the daily experiences that give researchers a personalized understanding of individual identity development and current life trajectories, highlighting individual differences within personal and social contexts that influence their identity formation process. Personal narratives can connect multiple identities of the women's lives into a pattern that explains their sense of self and ultimately "lends coherence to identity" (Lysaker, etc. 2001, p. 55). Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2006) thought of narrative inquiry as an inside view of human experience between individually and socially constructed lives. According to Connelly & Clandinin (2006),

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (p. 375)

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) drew on Dewey's two criteria of experience to develop a narrative view of experience. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote,

> People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context . . . Experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. (p. 2)

Episodic and autobiographical interviews. The narrative inquiry of an entire life story can be obtained through the incorporation of short (or episodic) and long-term (autobiographical) memories. Episodic memory is a form of autobiographical memory that is "context bound, refers to times and places, and is closely associated with the experience of remembering" (Conway, 1990, p. 3-4). Whereas autobiographical memory is of "significance for the self, for emotions, and for the experience of personhood, that is, for the experience of enduring as an individual, in a culture, over time" (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000, p. 261).

Because this study examines pre- and post-migration periods, both episodic and autobiographical interviews were used. The autobiographical memory shows how the self is developed and maintained over time through the recollections of events, life experiences, thoughts, and feelings. The autobiographical memory allows individuals to "to ask new questions of old information in order to solve problems in the present and to predict future events" (Bluck, 2003, p. 115). The recollections of autobiographical memory "may be accurate without being literal and may represent the personal meaning of an event at the expense of accuracy" (Conway, 1990, p. 9). However, these possible errors of memory events "do not violate the meaning of the recalled episode; in fact, if

anything they seem to emphasize the meaning" (Conway, 1990, p. 11). The episodic interview focused on a specific developmental event (e.g., decisions about education or finding employment). In this process, attention was given to the women's personal and career evolution experiences, specifically their academic and career development in their country of origin, followed by the details of their current academic and career development processes in the United States and their intended career trajectories and career development within new educational, sociocultural and employment systems. These methods, elicitation of both episodic and autobiographical memories, help take into account and describe the study participants' life experiences and help identify changes and strategies the women used to pursue their goals and redefine their lives after immigration. The results chronicle the EEI women's lives.

Narrative inquiry in this study. It is important to hear and understand how individual experiences of EEI women are shaped by the larger social, cultural, and personal narratives within which they live and have lived. I therefore chose a narrative methodology for this qualitative study because it allowed me, as a researcher, to look at the content, the components, and the function of how individuals represent their lives and identities through the stories they tell (Murray, 2003; Creswell, 2007; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). In addition, individuals undergoing transitions often make sense of themselves and their experience through narratives.

The narrative methodology also allowed me the opportunity to analyze the participants' own interpretations of their personal and social experiences, of the circumstances in which their story has unfolded, and of the ways in which they continue to be active agents in shaping their own lives (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Atkinson, 1998;

Gluck & Patai, 1991; Roets & Goedgeluck, 1999). This methodology encouraged reflection on the women's interpretations without guiding me to particular findings or predetermined outcomes.

The focus of the narrative inquiry in this study was understanding the personal journey of EE highly educated immigrant women in the United States. The immigrant women's narratives address the following topics: (1) personal/social learning and developmental and professional experiences prior to the migration; (2) reasons behind migration and first steps into adapting to life in the United States; (3) major factors that influenced educational resources in the new country; (4) further schooling or work; and (5) reflection on personal life trajectories. This study examines an overview of the connections the narrators made as they wove their stories into the whole narrative construction.

In short, the narrative approach was necessary for establishing internal and external self-analyses and dialogue among the highly educated EEI woman population. Such an approach to narrative content enabled me as a researcher to understand the processes of identity construction among EE immigrant women. It is through narrative autobiography that women construct and reconstruct their sense of self and continue their identity negotiations. The narrative inquiry methodology allowed not only me as the researcher, but also the participants and possible future readers the opportunity to understand how personal and social identities are entwined over time in EEI women's life trajectories (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007).

Interview Techniques

The questions used in narrative methodology interviews can range from an initial, specific question to broadly posed requests for respondents to describe their lives. In this study, interviews were taped, transcribed, and analyzed as texts; field notes were summarized when recording was not feasible. In line with the purpose of this study, the EEI women told their "life stories" in the way they liked and described notable events that they believed define their experiences. I asked further questions about the timing of specific events as well as questions that have been identified as significant in the extant literature, such as inquiries into personal and social relationships, power struggles, social adjustments, and so on. I also constructed timelines to account for significant events in the women's lives.

I used dialogue to create an inviting and open environment in order for participants to feel comfortable with expressing themselves in a safe space. The incorporation of the dialogical self presents the respondents' own perspectives, and gives them the authority to evaluate and express what has happened in their lives, what they need, and what solutions might assist them.

Selection and Recruitment of Participants

In order to be selected for this study, participants were required to meet several criteria. First, all of the participants needed to have immigrated to the United States between five and ten years ago and be of legal residence. This time line includes some grace period for the initial adaptation to the new country and a chance for self-evaluation. Different immigration statuses (refugee, immigrant, family reunification, student visa, and so on) represent various lengths of times and levels of complication, which may or

may not affect the adaptation process in terms of personal, academic, or career identity development. Therefore, this study included all types of EE women immigrants in regards to their immigration status entering the United States.

Second, participants needed to be from Eastern Europe, specifically from the former Soviet Union. Although Eastern Europe is a region that encompasses many different cultures, ethnicities, languages, and histories, EE countries historically were under a single designation and political boundary and therefore had one thing in common: they were all part of the former USSR. The countries which were part of the USSR are as follows: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Herzegovina, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine.

Third, participants needed to have been on the job market in the United States for one year or more in an attempt to enter into the career of their choice or they needed to be pursuing further education to earn an advanced degree (MA or PhD) or to be reinventing themselves through another BA in an in-demand and marketable field. I included women who have been able to make the transition very successfully, transporting their skills and credentials into careers similar to those that they were advancing in their country of origin. I also included women who, while they have a bachelor's degree or higher, are currently working in low-paying fields.

Fourth, I focused on first-generation women immigrants who migrated from their countries of origin after receiving undergraduate degrees or after obtaining work experience. I specifically focused on EE women between the ages of 27 and 69 who were living in California and Arizona.

Lastly, participants needed to have moderate conversational English fluency because it is an important aspect of successful assimilation into the host country. English was used during interviews and for transcriptions and coding of the data. However, participants were informed that they were free to respond in English, Russian, or Ukrainian during the interviews, given that I am proficient in all three languages. This enabled participants to fully express themselves, decreased linguistic restrictions, and created possibilities for open disclosures during conversations (Pavlenko, 2002; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). This is important because previous research shows that the language of interview creates the environment in which various types of information can be revealed (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

To recruit women who met these criteria, I used local social networks of people I knew to ask for referrals. Therefore, my social networks allowed me to use snowball sampling (Bogden & Biklen, 2003; 2007) as a quick way to connect to additional EE women who were interested in participating in the study. I contacted my potential participants through emails and phone calls. I initially explained the purpose of the study to the participants and my expectations for their involvement. After receiving verbal or emailed agreement from the participants, I arranged interviews with them.

Based on the criteria and following recruitment, the study was comprised of eight women. Four of the women lived in San Francisco and four lived in the suburbs of metropolitan Phoenix[2]. The eight main participants were chosen from 30 volunteer participants after a half-hour screening interview. Pseudonyms are used in place of participants' names.

[2] See Table 3 and Table 4

Data Collection

This study included in-depth interviews with eight EEI women living in suburban areas of Phoenix, AZ, and San Francisco, CA. The participants were asked to participate in two to three face-to-face interviews as a minimum requirement for participation. Each interview lasted one to two hours. The interviews were conducted in private locations in which the participants felt safe and in which interruptions were minimized. Participants chose the time for an interview based on their availability (i.e., morning, afternoon or evening). All interviews were audiotaped and the tapes were kept in a safe place to ensure confidentiality. Full, informed consent to participate in the interviews and to be audio-taped was essential in my research. Other forms of data collection included summaries of the narratives, timelines, and original creative works or artifacts produced by respondents, such as stories, photos, and so on, if participants offered them to more fully communicate their personal stories. In the interviews, I gathered life stories from these women, asking them open-ended questions about childhood, marriage, immigration, education, family relations, socio-economic status, employment, child-rearing, and other significant life events.

At the beginning of the interviews, participants were told that this study's purpose was to explore their responses to leaving their home countries and the personal changes they might have experienced as a result of immigration. I asked participants about their decisions to immigrate and what they left behind in their home countries. I also asked them whether they experienced any personal or professional losses and/or gains due to the migration. If so, I invited them to discuss how they responded to these losses within

their new home country. I also asked how they negotiated their pre- and post-migration experiences in both their native and host sociocultural settings.

The first interview with each of the eight main participants was conducted in-person for approximately one and one-half hours. These case study interviews were open-ended and provided a detail portrayal of each participant's personal story. The interview included four broad questions:

(1) If you could do it over again, would you be willing to come to the United States or would you prefer to stay in your home country and avoid immigration?

(2)What has helped you to do well after migration to the United States?

(3) Were there people or memorable events that have made it more difficult for you to do well or prevent you from doing well?

(4) Do you think you know any social or personal supports that would help you to continue doing well or help you overcome obstacles you have today?

I asked follow-up questions to discover their perceptions of the importance of and meaning of their experiences and for specific examples of helping and hindering. I also asked participants about their lives prior to immigration, how and why they decided to immigrate, how their family and friends felt about the move, what they miss about home, and how they stay connected. I also discussed with them their ability and willingness to maintain relationships with family and friends in the country they left behind. Following the interview, I asked participants to review their interviews to make sure that they were accurate and to give them the opportunity to add further information.

Procedures

First, the study was submitted for review to the Institutional Research Board of Arizona State University for approval to conduct ethical research on human subjects. It was approved prior to the data collection (see Appendix A).

After IRB approval, I recruited participants through word of mouth and through a recruitment letter (see Appendix B), posted in electronic social settings and sent to Eastern European immigrant women who I knew. This resulted in snowball sampling among Eastern European immigrant women. I was surprised to find out that some of my friends from Eastern Europe did not want to participate in the study. None of these women provided clearly defined answers concerning their refusal to participate in the study, so I can only speculate that their reasons may include story variations, our relationship, or other undefined feelings. However, all of the women were supportive of my research topic and the goal of the study. The women who decided to participate were interviewed first to determine if they qualified. They were then given a consent form (see Appendix C).

Interviews were then conducted at meeting places chosen by participants or via Skype communication. These were one-on-one interviews that lasted from one to two hours. As explained earlier, all participants were given an explanation of and goals of the study and were told that they could stop their participation at any time if they felt uncomfortable. Participants were told that pseudonyms would be used and all audio recordings and transcripts would be coded and kept in confidentiality. All of the first interviews were transcribed and second interviews were conducted between one to three months later. First interviews were coded to verify the researcher's understanding of the

narratives (see Appendix G) and were read during the second interviews. The purpose of the second interviews was to allow participants to give deeper reflections on their previously provided stories.

Trustworthiness of the Research

When conducting qualitative research, the topic of validity is important, specifically the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), research credibility is necessary in order to examine the research findings and interpretations made by the researcher; transferability is needed to assure that findings can be used or replicated in another setting; dependability shows that the findings can withstand the test of time; and confirmability inquires if the findings are representative of the participant's voice rather than the bias of the researcher.

In order to assure that my research results met these principles of trustworthiness, particularly credibility and confirmability, I used participant-checking to give participants an opportunity to provide feedback on data analysis. During the second interview, I solicited participants' approval of the statements and summaries I had written based on earlier interviews. The transferability of the research was gathered by conducting the same study in two states. In addition, I triangulated my data by using different methods of data collection, including one-on-one interviews, note taking, and auditing of interviews. To assure confirmability and reduce my personal bias, I reviewed preliminary results with my dissertation chair, Angela Arzubiaga, and reviewed the results of analyses and debated the results with my peer debrief and fellow colleague Larisa Marsala, M.Ed..

Also, to insure trustworthiness and confirmability of the research, I need to clarify my own positionality through a brief description, found below, of my social identity. In a narrative study, an author's outlining his or her perceived biases and assumptions in regards to the research topic can establish trust and help readers engage with that author's positionality (Morrow, 2007). Therefore, by acknowledging how my own cultural background as an Eastern European woman influenced the study, I hope to contribute and clarify my position within the research (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007).

I am a researcher, but I am also an Eastern European woman who shares many of the same characteristics as the participants in the study, including ethnic background, Russian language, gender, and immigrant status. My cultural identities include my origin as an Eastern European woman of middle socio-economic class, coming from a heterosexual nuclear family, with all of the immediate family members having higher education and successful careers, and my present identity as a United States citizen of the middle socio-economic class. My personal identity also includes being an only child whose family encouraged my educational desires and provided me with financial support. Further, my personal experience of unexpected migration, personal and professional identity evolution, and the barriers I encountered from family related to job searches were all likely to bias me and lead me to expect that other EEI women have had similar experiences.

Because of my positionality, I encouraged participants to identify with me as the audience for their stories. When I met or called each of the participants, I told them that I was a United States citizen and that I had chosen to pursue a graduate education and future employment in an educational field. I told participants that they were not being

evaluated by me but rather they were being heard as they told me their personal, professional, and social life trajectories. I felt that these women may view me as a successful immigrant woman who was able to manage her personal life (marriage, husband, and two kids) and professional one (working on her PhD) in hopes of establishing a successful career in education. On the other hand, I explained to them that I am still unable to find full-time employment and, therefore, I may not be as successful as they see me.

In addition, I was constantly conscious about my personal, professional, and social biases and expectations as I interpreted the collected narratives. I realized that my own experiences with the immigration process and my first steps in a foreign country may differ from the experiences of other women. I was careful to pay attention to their narratives regardless of similarities or differences from my own experiences, my cultural background, my social class and status prior to migration, and my personal, educational, and career choices.

Another aspect of establishing trustworthiness in research is to clarify the biases and expectations with which I began my research. I began my research expecting that EEI women would have various personal and professional identities associated with their personal, educational, and career background prior to migration and that they would have past and present levels of financial need. I expected that the personal and professional trajectories chosen by these women would be fairly influenced by the availability of social support (e.g., knowing the host country's educational and employment requirements, knowing someone who could guide them in the right direction), by their immediate financial needs, and by other internal or external factors.

Further, I hypothesized that those women who were unable to adjust their "dialogical self" as they encountered changes and challenges in their personal, academic, and career identities, would experience greater distress and more self-conflict that would limit their personal and professional life trajectories. Also, I believed that women with personal biases and unrealistic career expectations prior to migration and with an inability to use their prior education immediately following their migration may have less clear self of identity. In contrast, I hypothesized that the women who were less satisfied with their career identity prior to migration and/or the women who were able to adjust their "dialogical self" to the new situations they encountered after migration would be those most likely to have viewed the changes in identity caused by migration as a positive transition. I believed that they would have more self-satisfaction in their personal and career identities. As Malterud (2001) wrote,

> A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions. (p. 483-484)

I therefore hope that this discussion of my background and position will not only shed light on my choices of methodology and analysis but will also establish my research trustworthiness by showcasing my evaluations within credibility and transferability of findings (Lincoln, Guba 1985).

Data Analysis

In analyzing the transcribed interviews, I selected the following frames of analysis: references to temporal sequences and forms of interaction (doing well with

changes affecting education and work); location and era (I used past, present, and future timelines); and significant experiences within sociocultural contexts (previous and new community, family, and wider society) as an interaction of internal personality factors and external environmental factors (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, 2000). Each of the participant's narratives produced various dimensions that emerged in the process of personal, professional, and social identity re-construction within social and geographical contexts and with internal and external factors. Through multiple readings of transcripts, I outlined the emerging themes and dimensions of interest and focused on each of the chosen dimensions in my analysis in the findings section.

As discussed earlier, the idea of using narrative inquiry was to cover a wide span of time in a participant's life. The first part of the interview required participants to recall their lives prior to migration within particular social, cultural, and personal contexts. The second part of the interview required participants to recall their lives prior to migration within specific social, cultural, and personal contexts. And the third part of the interview asked participants to tell about their future dreams and hopes. As Rogoff (2003) pointed out, each participant's identity is potentially influenced by social and historical events; therefore, it is important to understand these factors in order to contextualize participants' interviews.

Method of Narrative Data Analysis

In this section I will explain how the data were prepared for analysis. First, all of the interviews were given in English or transcribed from Russian into English by the author, who is fluent in both Russian and English. Second, all of the interviews were

written into summaries for the second interview. All of the individual summarized profiles (see Appendix F) and excerpts from women narratives (see Appendix G) were read to each participant during the second interviews to insure the accuracy of the given data.

All of the transcripts were read multiple times to insure that all of the texts related to personal and professional identity. To keep collected data on track, it was coded into domains, categories, and themes. The coding and transcripts were entered into Dedoose Qualitative Research Data Analysis Software, which helped when maintaining and adding new categories and sub-categories. The three emerging domains were (1) personal, professional, and social identity development in Eastern Europe; (2) personal, professional, and social identity development in the United States; and (3) personal, professional, and social identity evolution over time and planned for the future. Each time the transcripts were read and coded, the emerging ideas were grouped and placed in the relevant domains. As the text was accumulating within the domains, the particular topics emerged. The topics were then sorted into categories or subcategories that reflected the specific emerging concepts (e.g., establishment of post-migration careers, further education, or linguistic barriers). To summarize, all of the participants' narratives were first placed in domains that represented the main ideas; second, the main ideas were further deconstructed into emerging categories; third, the categories were additionally refined as themes emerged (e. g., depression, worthlessness, hope and regret) (see Table 1 and Table 2).

As all of the individual narratives were analyzed and the main ideas were placed in relevant categories, these categories were reviewed again to see if the overlapping sub-

categories could be merged or if some of them had to be re-categorized. Once all of the individual analyses were completed and necessary adjustments were made, the narratives were examined for the data that consistently emerged across all participants. All of the main ideas were reviewed in accordance with their affiliation within existing categories across all participants. The necessary adjustments were made to subcategories to reduce redundancy among subcategories and categories. Analyses of all narratives were explained by the formed 10 categories, 20 sub-categories, and 50 themes. This analyses were audited by me and Larissa Marsala, M.Ed.. These findings help define individual narratives within broader social and cultural contexts. All of the data were written in chronological order to emphasize a series of recalled events that occurred in different social, historical, and geographical contexts and that touched various psychological and sociological aspects of individual's identity changes.

In summary, this study was conducted from a sociocultural perspective using narrative methodology. The interviews were analyzed according to the principles suggested by Clandinin & Huber (2010) and Clandinin and Connelly (1998, 2000). The trustworthiness of the research and results were ensured through multiple approaches, specifically paying attention to issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, as prescribed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and by identifying researcher's positionality, as proposed by Morrow (2007).The findings report experiences in the individually and socially constructed lives of participating EEI women in the United States using a narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2006). All of the participants' demographic and employment data are provided respectively (see Table 3 and Table 4), with participants identified by pseudonyms.

Chapter Five

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to use narrative inquiry to identify and understand the development of Eastern European immigrant women's personal, professional, and social identities and life trajectories, specifically focusing on their pre-migration experiences in countries belonging to the former Soviet Union and their post-migration experiences in the United States of America.

During analysis, three main domains were examined, and each domain's categories and sub-categories were represented by their themes. The first two domains reflected the chronological phases of the women's personal, professional, and social development, including participants' life trajectories before and after migration. The third domain examined the women's personal, professional, and social identity evolution over time and their plans for the future. In this section, important elements in the women's personal narratives are reported chronologically (past, present, and future) and categorically (within each domain).

In summary, all of the participants had various reasons why they chose to migrate to the United States. Some women noted that it was always their dream to live in America, whereas others simply said it was an unplanned opportunity that they decided to follow. Once they arrived, all of the women were surprised to see that it was somehow different from their expectations and from the pictures they had drawn in their minds. All of the participants described the long and sometimes uneasy process of their personal, professional, and social adjustments to a very different lifestyle.

Personal, Professional, and Social Development in Countries of the Former Soviet Union

The first domain concerns the participants' personal, professional, and social development in countries of the former Soviet Union. The data analyses were divided into three categories: personal, which depicts participants' specific individual needs and wants; social, which depicts the influences of socio-economic systems and social forces; and professional, which concerns participants' education and career development. These three found categories and the themes that emerged within them are outlined in the following sections.

Individual needs and wants. This first category demonstrates the multiple psychological processes within each woman's childhood. In this part of the narratives, participants reflected on their family upbringing and their personal plans for the future. These reflections gave participants the opportunity to recall their relationships with immediate and extended family members.

Immediate and extended family relationships. One important element in the narratives was the centrality of family or the absence of family unity. Most of the immigrant women in this study viewed family as an invaluable source of personal fulfillment. They valued their families as the basis for the development of character, educational achievements, social relationships, social status, personal dreams and desires, and personal confidence. For example, Natasha explains how her mother was a constant example of personal and family strength and encouragement:

> I can say that my family, in the case of education and family structure, was very supportive. My mom raised us as we are "all for one and one for all," so we

would defend each other and we didn't feel lonely. Like we didn't had any friends and always knew that if the whole word was against us, we always had each other…. She dedicated her time to all of us even with the poor financial abilities. She put a lot in our education: we all went to music school, we also always went to opera, museums, libraries, presentations on the weekends… She always supported all of our ideas and we all were the best for her. She always said that her kids are the best and it was raising a bar for us. The "5" grade was a norm for us. Sometimes you may have a "'4," but for the "3" don't even mention it…. Our grandmother was helping us financially or otherwise. She was supporting us in everything…

However, some participants lacked family support in their childhood years. The absence of the family unit left these women with hurt feelings and unresolved issues that affected their personal development in both childhood and adulthood. This is reflected in Dasha's brief statement:

I got problems during my childhood, psychological issues like low-esteem, instability…. My parents live in Russia thousand miles away from here and I did not have any contacts with them since I graduated from the high school. I was 16 years old when I left my home and I never really kept contact with them. They were not ever interested in me…

Dasha's depiction of her family's neglect and the absence of their support should not be judged as a standard family practice, but rather noted as a non-normative family structure due to various internal or external reasons. On the contrary, this study shows that a majority of the immigrants valued their family practices and cultural upbringing.

Women noted the importance of their childhood as a reference for their own family dynamics. In addition, Eastern European family units tend to constitute a large network of immediate and extended family members (Robila, 2004). A majority of the immigrants reported that they miss their extended families, as most of them continue to reside in their countries of origin (Falicov, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Secret dreams and desires. After the fall of the Soviet Union and with continuous social and political changes in each of the newly independent countries, some of the women were eager for major changes in their path of life. Some believed their future was not in the country of their origin, but in the country of their dreams: the United States of America. These women viewed the option to choose which country they could build their personal and professional lives as a source of personal fulfillment. For example, Olga described how her teenage dreams came true after more than 20 years of opportunity seeking:

> So when I migrated, I was 43 years old… I learned about America and life in America when I was like 18-20 and it was USSR time, it was a communist time. Everything was prohibited and everything was restricted. And I found some books where people who traveled to America were describing life in America and I always wonder to go and to see this life. And of course, it was only my dreams because at that time there was no reality to go to America… I worked for the government… And after the USSR collapsed and all this instability in Ukraine arise and it was a lot of conflict things in government. Some people who worked in government, they got into position where you cannot do what they asking you to do because it is illegal and you cannot say no, so it is very complicated to

> explain, but it ended that I became a political refugee in America. So I came to America in totally different circumstances than I was approaching [it was unexpected immigration without a planned future] when I was young.

Like Olga, five of the participants noted that they never planned to leave their home, but it had just happened.

As can be seen in Appendix D, four of the eight participants married husbands from the United States. Three of the women described themselves as being very proactive about their search for a foreign husband. They invested time and energy into choosing a match who could provide them a bright and promising future. Their sense of personal satisfaction was connected with their desire for a partnership that would lead to financial stability and personal freedom. While these three women actively sought husbands, one of them, Alena, made light of her pursuit. Even though Alena attended socials at a marriage agency for three years, she emphasized that they were merely entertainment. Alena described her search for a husband as follows:

> I went to marriage agency as a lot of girls do. I didn't see that it would become something serious; I just went there for fun, to have some fun, to go to these socials to have fun, practice my English, like to have party… It was nothing serious; I went there for maybe three years or more. I went to all of these socials but it never ended up to be nothing really serious. And once I met my husband… I never been abroad before so I do not know what is good what is bad, but somehow consciously I know that America is the best. It should be better, so doesn't matter how good in Ukraine, I know America is better. That is why I decided it is not going to be worse for me and it is only going to be better.

As the excerpt above from Alena's narrative shows, in this research all of the participants viewed their migration as an opportunity to better their personal and professional life trajectories. All of the women had great hopes for their future in the United States and believed that with more social and political freedom they could achieve greater things. This finding is consistent with previous research. The change of political systems and sudden economic hardships after the fall of communist regimes and the continuing struggles of current democratic regimes were found by previous research to be the primary factors behind decisions to migrate (Okolski, 2000; Robila, 2010).

Sociocultural factors before migration. The second category outlined sociocultural factors that contributed to the women's overall personal identity development. The women viewed social status and recognition, media, friends, and social network support as influential for providing them with contacts and introductions to new marriage programs and to people from other countries. Tanya highlights this by recalling how she first got introduced to a foreign marriage club: "[I] look for some environment that would foster me with English… so my friend said why don't you go to the study groups? Not study groups, I apologize, some meetings, and she did not gave me any details."

In addition, the majority of participants noted that their family's social networks, and encouragement led to their securing their first jobs. For example, Masha recalled how she got her first job: "I was working in economics, but my education was in computers… I was working in economics because one of the family friends offers that job to me." The importance of family connections to employment was a repeated phenomenon in this study and in others. Previous research shows that in the Soviet Union and after its

collapse, an individual's educational choices, career trajectories, and social status were profoundly influenced by their family's social connections and financial abilities (Skorikov & Vondracek, 1993; Teckenberg, 1989; Yost & Lucas, 2002).

Social recognition within careers and educational programs also affected the women's identity development because, as is common in the collectivist structures of many Eastern European countries, the women valued being recognized as someone who contributes to the overall good of the community and country. The participants mentioned that being part of a group made them feel confident and filled them with the positive feelings that accompany peer support and encouragement. Svetlana, a former psychiatrist, expressed her thoughts on society membership in the following excerpt:

> Somebody needs to help and say something. If person can't do something by himself, he needs to ask somebody's help, [somebody] who can help to overcame issues either psychologist, educator, doctor, or like my friend is my guru, or somewhere you can find understanding, support… In life, whatever you do . . . you hold yourself surrounded by your own circle… Even in the middle of mess in Ukraine, the core of the personal as well as social transparency is still there… It is maybe no more that 30%, but it still standing. Even to the constant demolishing, fire, and other distractions, it is been reborn, and it is called a progressive reborn of the citizen which is similar in all of the countries and nations. Overall, the people may never be in the center but they will always hold this neutral position… without killing and robbing others…Because it wasn't our customary, it was a whole crime not only to the country but to the whole humanitarian nation. (translated from Russian)

In the quote above Svetlana expressed her personal and community ideologies of belonging and what it means to be a part of a society. She placed primary importance on being a human and on staying true to oneself in order to benefit the larger society.

Also, some of the participants identified social recognition of their pre- migration careers as an important addition that strengthened their professional identity. Two of the women, Olga and Svetlana, who had long-standing careers and gained social recognition and respect from others due to their jobs in government and health care sectors mentioned this recognition as an important part of their lives. Both of these jobs offered the women prestige, occupational benefits, and social recognition by employers, coworkers, neighbors, and family.

Professional career interests and actions. This third category encompasses the women's personal and professional choices and the factors that contributed to their professional identity development. These factors included (a) sociocultural expectations, (b) pursuit of education, and (c) personal expectations of employment.

Sociocultural expectations. The Soviet Union era and post-Soviet Union era had important influences on participants' professional choices. The majority of women were raised in cultures in which men and women had equality in education and employment and in which women were viewed as equal forces in the economy. Women were expected to earn an education and to join the workforce. Because of these cultural and social norms, all of the participants felt the need to continue their employment after marriage. All of the women felt a shared responsibility for the family income.

Participants valued their ability to manage multiple responsibilities and thought that this quality was necessary for every woman. As Olga stated,

> In Ukraine, women much more equal to men and we are not fighting for it. We actually grow up in that and we do not realize it, but actually our society women was equal to men much , much, much early then in America… Equal is some kind of like freedom that you can talk to men equally, that you can have your opinion, and express it openly. And if you have an education and you smart, you can hold some position… In my country of origin I always had a job. I always had a job and I was growing up in the career, so I was moving constantly in the career and building a career.

All of the women noted that they thought an education was the norm for social acceptance, and as previous studies indicate, their professional careers were a part of their social identity (Remennick, 2007). Despite the negative prospect of work as only a monetary compensation, participants in this study saw it as a way of self-realization in professional and social settings. The women's attitudes toward pursuing something that they felt they needed for self-validation was heard through a majority of the narratives.

Pursuit of education. Another key finding that emerged in the women's narratives was the necessity of pursuing an education[3] early in life. All of the participants in this study received professional diplomas or university degrees from their country of origin. As discussed previously, society in their countries of origin expected women to pursue an education, but family members also contributed to participants' internalization of this societal expectation. Some of the women spoke about their parents' education and

[3] See Table 5

careers and their family's educational expectations from them. They recalled their family's emotional support, advice, and guidance in choosing a career and employment. Olga, a former head of a government department, mentioned, "My parents were engineers. All my family was with master's degree, so of course we were oriented from early childhood that degree mean a lot and it mean not hard work and it mean a little more money."

Participants pursued education as a way to find prosperous employment after their graduation and to have social status among their peers. Three of the women who received their education during the Soviet Union era described that education as clearly oriented towards employment. Once they received their jobs, their professions remained virtually unchanged. However, all of the women admitted that after the fall of the Soviet Union and given the current economic and political situations in post-Soviet Union countries, none of them felt any security in and towards employment.

Expectations of employment. All of the participants noted the importance of their professional careers to their identities. The women saw their full identities as a combination of personal and professional subject positions. All of the women expressed their search for the perfect career as a way to establish their personal fulfillment, economic stability, financial and personal independence, and social status. A few of the women wanted to reach certain career goals and leadership positions within their chosen fields of employment. As Olga stated,

> I was working in government in different departments and it was like an employment department. It was an OSHA department, and but it is kind of like one department hold like very different topics, not just one and this is what it was.

I started as a just simple program manager and I ended as a director of department. So I got into very good level government position.

Some of the participants believed that they had or would find jobs within their career paths that would also incorporate their current or future family's needs. On the other hand, some women saw their career plans crushed under the actual market situation. These workforce uncertainties were captured by Dasha in the following quote: "I got bachelor in architecture… Yes, but I didn't use it of course… I just got it… I had nothing else to do… At that time was 1990s, yearly 90th and all of that mess in Russia everything." As Dasha alluded to, during the 1990s, post-Soviet Union countries experienced restructuring from the Soviet administrative, political, and economic command systems. Dissolution of the Soviet Union's structure and implementation of new reforms marked the fall of many industries, abolishment of monetary controls, job insecurities, unemployment, taxation, and overall financial instability (Wikipedia contributors, 2013, Yakushko, 2008). Some of the participants who lived through these tough times were too familiar with the struggles of everyday life and because of social circumstances were pushed to seek financial security among various limited employment avenues (Robila, 2004).

Another theme that emerged from participants' narratives was the expectation of balancing family and children with careers in order to maintain a professional identity. For example, Svetlana explains how she managed her priorities in the following narrative excerpt:

At one point I was a department head and a main doctor and had all kind of clients from regular people to the very important once. Managing a lot of patients

> are very tiredness and very rewarding simultaneously, but you have to be moving with time to not only benefit your clients but also your family. It is a constant work out to keep yourself in check and to know what and where you can do. (translated from Russian)

All but one of the participants noted that their greatest personal achievement was their role as a mother. As emerging literature on Eastern European families and immigrant families shows, children occupy a central position in the family, and the whole family, particularly mothers and grandmothers, play an important role in their upbringing (Gold, 2007; Nesteruk, 2010; Nesteruk and Marks, 2009; Robila, 2004, 2010). These mothers and grandmothers strived to provide their children with adequate opportunities for family time, cultural enlightenment, and educational motivation in their new environment. Therefore, all of the women felt like a career provided them with an opportunity for growth outside the family and with a short relief from domestic responsibilities. All of the participants viewed their professional careers as something uniquely for themselves. They felt confident and skilled and derived happiness and pride in their work. Svetlana, a former retired psychiatrist, emphasizes in the following statement that her career was part of her "purpose," part of what she needed to achieve in her life:

> I had achieved my purpose… it is too bad if you didn't realized what you had to achieve in your life…, but I had done it already in my professional life, the doctor will be a doctor until he dies… (translated from Russian)

For Svetlana, then, as for other women in the study, her professional identity was so important that she expected it to be a part of her throughout her life. The women

therefore demonstrated proudly the cultural notion of women's intertwined professional and personal trajectories (Remennick, 2007; Yakushko & Cronister, 2005).

All of the women were eager to establish their professional careers in their new environments. All of the women expected to find meaningful employment or to continue evolving in their professional trajectories after their relocation. Yet as they discovered and as previous research shows, immigrants from Eastern European tend to struggle to regain their careers, to maximize their employment efforts, and to prevent greater loss of social status (Remennick, 2013; Yakushko, 2006; Remennick, 2007).

To summarize this first domain, all of the participants emphasized their personal identities, family support, and education as important parts of their personal, professional, and social life trajectories. These factors were consistent in all of the women's personal narratives. Participants also needed professional recognition as a source of personal satisfaction and self-esteem and as a means of developing a complete personal identity.

Personal, Professional, and Social Development in the United States

Once the women migrated to the United States (each for various reasons, including political protection, marriage opportunities, and family reunifications), all experienced drastic changes in their personal and professional plans and identities. This second domain outlines these changes in three categories. The first category focuses on personal negotiations of linguistic, family, and economic realities; the second describes professional barriers, including the declining value of their prior education and work experiences and discrimination; and the third category focuses on socio-economic forces present in their new contexts, forces that require continuous identity development and

inner change. All of these categories and their themes are discussed in the following section.

Personal negotiations of linguistic, family, individual and economic realities. This category consists specifically of linguistic barriers to employment, struggles within immigrants' family systems, personal uncertainties and insecurities, and financial instabilities. These barriers presented challenges to these immigrant women as they navigated their new surroundings.

Second language barriers. After migrating to the United States, all of the participants noted that they lacked the required English language fluency for comfortably assimilating into their new environments.

Although the majority of the participants had learned English (as a chosen foreign language) at school or in universities prior to migration, all of the women took ESL (second language learning) classes either at community colleges or community centers. All of the participants reported that learning English in these classes, where all explanations and teaching were provided in English, helped them acquire the language much quicker than they thought possible. Because many of the women were essentially re-learning English, some struggled with juggling previously learned material (the British version of the English language) with the new American vocabulary. As Natasha remembered,

> I always had a good grades, but when I first came here, it seem like I never took any classes whatsoever. It was almost like a bird language. I couldn't understand where was the beginning or the end of the sentence. It was one long word. But of course, because I had some training, I was able to catch up very fast. In a couple

of weeks I was fine. But of course, at first a culture shock and language shock. Of course it was something else…

Language adaptation was an important step for all of the immigrants. The women believed that if they lack English proficiency, they would be less capable of securing employment and of advancing professionally and in social standings, a belief common among immigrants. This finding is in line with prior research on language adaptation, where immigrants associated their advances or lack in English proficiency with many positive or negative outcomes respectfully (Remennick, 2004; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; DeSilva, 2010). Therefore, all of the women in this study chose to learn or improve their language skills in order to become a full citizen of their new country.

Impact of family responsibilities. Seven of the eight participants are mothers, and three are grandmothers. Therefore, all of the women struggled to combine their employment searches with their family responsibilities. In addition, three of the eight women reported that they were the sole providers for their families. All of the women were motivated to seek employment that would fulfill their economic and psychological needs as well as their children's schedules. Yet the majority of the participants reported that they were unable to provide as much as they wanted for their children and for the other family members they supported and were therefore disappointed with their current financial situations.

In the following excerpt, Tanya describes how her current work affects her family:

I am a part-time, but I am on the call. I am not stable, you know. Two weeks ago I worked six days straight. This week I was called for two emergencies for half a

> day only. Where I work, I have work, but I never know when I will work. So I was thinking that I am going to be completely empty today, but no, I am working, so you never know and you can never plan your day. On Friday I was called to work, but it was already too late as I had a meeting, so it was not time for me…, but you know, this is my job.

All of the women struggled to balance their wishes for a professional identity with their family responsibilities. The majority of the women entered the workforce as soon as their immigration status would legally allow them to work. Some of the women felt the need for some academic retraining first, and once that was completed, they started their career search. However, some of the women were under tremendous pressure to provide instant income, so they were required to stop their re-education process in order to fulfill their responsibilities to provide for their families. Dasha was one participant whose family situation forced her to cut short her academic desires:

> But I had to work… it's for me was like work or don't work ever… go back to school and go for ever-ever… but I need it income… my husband doesn't work, like, for the last three years, so I need it to work… so that is all …

Being an equal partner. All of the women in this study viewed themselves as individuals who were striving for complete participation within their adopted communities. These women were all raised in a collectivistic society and ideology in which both genders' access to personal and professional rights allowed them to pursue various power relations in their homes and societies. Natasha expresses this mindset in the following narrative excerpt:

> But at the same time I can't. I am that kind of women who needs to be in partnership with my husband. I don't want to be a dependent person even if I could, even if he tell me don't worry about a thing and take classes for your personal development. Whatever, I can't. I want to be a partner, and I want for us to be equal. I want for help him as much as he helps me. And I am trying, I'm trying.

According to the literature, marriage generally provides an individual with psychological support and other rewarding effects on one's well-being (Constant and Massey 2002; Lucas et al. 2003). Yet two of the eight participants mentioned that their husbands strongly disagreed with their desires to continue their education or careers. Both of the women's husbands saw their respective spouses only as housewives who should take care of the house and their men. However, both of the women said that they did not see themselves being satisfied only in the family environment and wanted to secure a personal space for individual achievements. As Maria recalled, "No, my husband didn't support me… He was actually trying to mess me up… He couldn't understand." (translated from Russian)

All of the women expressed the desire to become an equal partner with their spouse or an independent provider to their family unit; such a desire was a foundational principle of their cultural history, a cultural history that established equal partnership as a financial and moral obligation for the women.

Restraining of personal matters. Previous research shows that interaction with the United States population may increase immigrants' cultural understanding and make

the adaptation process much easier (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). All of the participants received both supportive and non-supportive feedback in their interactions, either at their workplace or in social or academic settings. Most women who had a successful story of personal or professional achievement recounted positive and supportive feedback. On the other hand, women who were struggling with the current employment situation disclosed more negative feedback.

Overall, all of the participants described some of the encountered personal and professional setbacks as a result of their personal struggles with trying to navigate and experience what this new society has to offer. As Dasha recalled,

> It was only myself. I would not blame any people. Everyone was helping, pretty much. It just me who never believed in myself, and like I said, always you know… just, I don't know, thinking that I do not deserve… I don't know, something like that. You know, I would probably make a little better career or money, but I was always holding myself back. No one else I would want to blame…

Most women described their cultural upbringing by explaining their personal values, beliefs, personal and professional expectations, dreams, desires, and family traditions. Most described their previous experiences of work recognition leading to professional satisfaction. However, a majority of the participants noted that they have noticed a huge difference among Western culture in the United States and Eastern European culture in their personal, professional, and social daily encounters. For example, Natasha describes her struggle between her known cultural values and new expectations:

> Here, being modest is like you are looser, so it's a big mental difference and for us it's hard to adjust… It is hard for me to come here and say "Yes, I am the best and I can do that and that" . . . I always felt like I need to be objective, like I can't promise something if I don't know if I can deliver it…

This uncertainty and unfamiliarity with foreign culture, combined with the inability to change in a short period of time and the psychological confusion of values and beliefs, were common threads running through each individual's narrative.

Reality of financial instability. Difficulties with securing employment after migration, while figuring out the new employment market or thinking about academic career changes, left the women with concerns about financial security. The majority of the women experienced the harsh reality of job instability and few or no work benefits. They confessed that even with all of the professional and academic changes they had made, they felt pushed to accept any available work with the hope of landing a stable and promising job. A couple of the women held two part-time jobs simultaneously. One older woman, who had already retired prior to migration, felt a need to continue working part-time. Two of the women who invested their time and energy into academic changes tried to justify their feelings of frustration and their needs and hopes while analyzing their professional progress. They shared their feelings about their past and present experiences of striving to establish their professional careers and career identities. As Dasha said,

> And I don't see, I am barely making it still…you know… I am happy with what I have, but I don't work full time and I would be happy to work full time. I would

like to find good office… I guess I mean still like to find a kind of good office, but not enough hours. I would like to more work and a little bit more money…

This willingness to continue and seek not just employment but also professional advancement was a frequent refrain in the majority of the stories. However, as previous research shows, the majority of the participants found themselves underemployed or working in a field that was not based on their education or experience (Vinokurov, Birman, Trickett, 2000).

Professional barriers and discrimination regarding education and work experience.

The United States' educational and employment-related systems were also a common barrier that the majority of the participants had to navigate alone. The unknown aspects of another country's economic and political laws noticeably impeded participants' searches for employment and employers' recognition of their previous work experiences. Along with the challenges accompanying personal and social negotiation of their immigrant status in a new environment, participants faced devaluation of their existing educational credentials and a sudden need to requalify. All of the participants faced these barriers and therefore went through a reflective process of evaluating their qualifications, the employment requirements, and the resulting professional implications. All of the participants experienced a range of emotions related to their professional life.

Three of the eight participants reported having long, successful careers prior to their migration. Two of these women experienced personal confusion and a range of dissatisfying emotions due to the loss of their former status and occupations. They felt frustration, professional confusion, and decreased self-worth and self-esteem. The third

woman, who had a successful pre-migration career, was able to find employment in her previous career field, thanks to community guidance. All of the participants longed for the chance to prove themselves in both personal and professional trajectories. Participants equated feelings of self-worth, satisfaction, achievement, and social status with their careers and the personal independence that accompanies a career. In short, finding a job and looking for desired employment was rife with financial insecurities and personal dissatisfaction.

Lack of recognition of previous education and work experiences. One common theme in the women's narratives was employers' failure to recognize their educational qualifications and previous work experiences. All of the participants noted that education was highly valued in their countries of origin. Eastern European society saw higher education as a means of social mobility for women, and viewed women as highly desired professional individuals and as valued members of society. The non-recognition or under-valuing of credentials by United States employers and by the overall educational system furthered impeded these educated immigrant women in the process of re-establishing a sense of self. For example, Svetlana noted the difficulty of fulfilling all of the requirements necessary to reestablish her professional trajectory as a medical doctor:

> So here I couldn't make a doctor career… no, I thought that I could, but then I found out what I would need to do, all of the small details, and it is a huge workload not only psychologically and physically, but also financially… (translated from Russian)

All of the women faced previously unknown differences between educational cultures and the choice to continue the same professional trajectory or to follow new

career paths and new academic endeavors. Tanya recalled her personal negotiations regarding this career choice as follows:

> For year I was studying a language and being in school. I understood that I cannot be a teacher here because I have a strong accent and I do not feel comfortable to be in trust of the kids who… they speak much better. I knew that I wouldn't be a teacher here. I did not feel, you know, self in that area… so I started to look around and I always like medicine, but in Ukraine it was impossible for some reasons or I did not dream this big… and I was wanted to be a dentist… and I wanted to be in the dental field and I was thinking about something stable, and I was thinking between dental hygienist or being a nurse.

Two of the eight women reported that they were no longer relying on their pre-migration degrees and had chosen to earn new degrees and follow new career paths. All of the women shared the financial responsibilities of their families and were troubled by the consequences of being unemployed, so their occupational choices were aligned to their families' well-being. As a result, in order to avoid completely losing their chances to obtain a career, they often sought work in available occupations that did not require extensive training. As Olga noted,

> I am better with my English. I am much better with my English. Can I utilize my management skills? No. Can I utilize my degree? No. What I utilizing is my English. And like people here often tell me that my English is good… yes, I need, I have desire, I have strength, I have experience, I have everything, I need just someone who believe in me and who can bring me to place where I can utilize my knowledge and experience to the best.

All of the participants were faced with very difficult decisions about pursuing new careers, following prior career paths, or enrolling in academic courses to establish professional trajectories in the United States. It was important for all of these women to achieve some level of recognition in their professional lives. When choosing an appropriate path, Maria noted the importance of analyzing one's assets:

> When somebody asks me for advice, I always say that you do not need to search blindly but instead do what you know the best. If you know your field, than continue do it, but if you do not know what you had learn, than it is of course…. But if you know it then do it… (translated from Russian)

All of the women were seeking financial and professional stability, and the journey they were on resulted in most questioning their path. Partially due to the personal and professional sacrifices of relocating to another continent, several women questioned the value of their prior education and work experiences and the feelings, time, and energy that they had invested in these endeavors. These findings are supported by previous research that notes that formal credentials, occupational domains criteria, and intellectual and professional skills may widely differ between national contexts (Remennick, 2004; Robila, 2004).

Maintaining prior career paths. Some of the women hoped to be able to reclaim their former professions or follow their career dreams. Many of these participants felt that the derailment from their projected career paths due to their immigration was too much to handle. Some women expressed that the complete withdrawal from their personal and professional goals and identities after their migration had left them completely empty and shattered inside. In the following excerpt, Natasha describes her choice to work in the

same pre-migration career trajectory compared with the possibility of completely reinventing herself:

> Because I knew if I would give up, I'll be a bitter person and it would affect my marriage… Because I feel like I need to give up everything and in the beginning when we argued, it will always come up: like, I had to quit my job, I have to speak your language, you like cats and I like dogs, why do we have cat? You know… it's like why everything is your way… so I knew that if I would totally had to give up, I would not forgive it my husband, and then I would lose everything. It was if I had to lose my career because of my marriage because he is a perfect guy and I love him so much and that's what makes sense then. So I thought let's just try and I am still not totally convinced. . . I am still think sometimes that maybe I do need to switch because I want to be able to make normal money. I know that I am smart and intelligent and I am capable of doing great… I mean this was my career path. My old "questioners" (anketa) that we had that I had maybe in third grade had in it that I want to be a TV anchor. So that what I had a long, long time ago.

The women who were determined to maintain their former careers were able to contain their feelings of being overwhelmed by the obstacles only through personal confidence in their knowledge and skills within their professional spheres.

Some of the women noted that it was hard to navigate the new educational system, and they were thankful to people who helped and guided them through the process of enrollment. In addition, some of the women actively volunteered in various programs in order to build their professional resumes.

Differences in workplace culture. In the former Soviet Union countries, many businesses follow a strong hierarchical structure in which all employees know their company's or department's infrastructure and show respect to those in positions of authority. Managers tend to be authoritarian people who expect their subordinates to follow given instructions, and employees believe that managers know the correct way to do business and therefore do not challenge them. People also believe that trust is a required element in the working environment. Another cultural custom is that young people show respect for those who are older and are more experienced in personal, social, and professional settings. These differences in workplace cultures are illustrated by Alena in her description of her experiences:

> In the beginning I had multiple adjustments because in Ukraine I used to this boss, director and they tell you what to do. Like they know what is good, so they tell you what to do so you kind of expect them and you know this is a boss, big person. And here manager, she doesn't know what is going on. She doesn't know how to do everything, so sometimes she asks me and I am, how do I know? You are the manager, you supposed to know… This is what I understand… And now I just see that you need to take a charge… If you see that something needs to be done, you just do it… Do not ask, do not wait, they tell you, just do it.

Impact of employment discrimination. In particular, participants reported that language fluency and their accents hindered them from attaining their professional goals in the employment market in the United States. Although all of the women took ESL classes, as discussed earlier, they all reported that having an accent was particularly challenging in the linguistic reality of professional employment. Alena explained how

her accent affected her communication as follows: “Three years ago when I just came to go for work, it was too much for me. I didn’t understand people and still people do not understand me right now. They say, ‘What, you have accent? I do not understand.’”

Existence of a heavy accent affected most of the participants’ employability such that they could only obtain part-time jobs at local retail stores and business offices. Such employment was typically associated with unstable work schedules, low salaries, and no benefits. The biggest impact of their accents was the professional and financial reality of the improbability of attaining jobs within their former professions, despite qualifications and prior experiences. In fact, the majority of the women said that they encountered discrimination because of their heavy accent. As Olga noted,

> And another thing, probably a lot of jobs, my accent, so when they hear your accent, they like not taking you for job here. A lot of positions they hire people if they talk Spanish is plus. So a lot of open positions they prefer to have English and Spanish speaking. So for people who is Russian speaking this is …

Some of the participants shared that they did not fully pursue their professional trajectories because of employers’ unwillingness to seriously consider someone with an accent for the desired full-time positions. As Tanya said,

> Unfortunately, because I am foreign . . . even so I have masters and bachelors and blah, blah, certification that I have… I have more certifications then majority of hygienists--alia certified, zoom certified, anesthesia, ta, ta, and I would have more…, but because of my accent and English, probably, I believe that is why I am still unemployed. So I would say that to acquired realization that I had in the

last couple of month that I am being judge that I am not being an American and what I want, blah, blah, to became equal…

All of the participants felt like they were an invisible minority, but their accents gave them a poor self-perception that resulted in a lack of job interviews and full-time employment offers. None of the women were prepared to be judged and discriminated in their efforts to become rightful members of society. For the majority of women, English was the second foreign language that they had learned, and they experienced distress and uneasiness from the limitations of being foreign in their personal, professional, and social lives.

Only two of the eight women were able to find full-time, satisfactory employment, even with their notable accents. These two women were the only participants who were financially and emotionally satisfied with their personal post-migration experiences.

In addition to linguistic discrimination, four out of the eight women are in their 40s or older and had experienced some sort of age discrimination. All were eager to become valuable members of society, but because of their biological age, they were disappointed in the available possibilities in their professional trajectories. For example, Olga shared her own perception and evaluation regarding the possibility of a future in academics for her:

> Because I went to take my second master and when I finished my master's, I was enrolled in PhD and then I counted that when I finish my PhD, I will be over 50 years old, and I have no experience in America, and basically the reality in America nobody will hire me in good position with my PhD when I am over 50.

If I was in my 30s, it would be totally different picture. So, yes, time, age is very crucial in America to have success.

All of the women in this study reported that they encountered various types of social oppression and employment discrimination. These findings are consistent with current research on immigrants' experiences being subject to xenophobia, racism, ageism, sexism, and discrimination (Berger, 2004; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Yakushko, 2007; Yakushko & Chronister, 2005). The key discrimination factor in this study was participants' noticeable accent and therefore presumed lack of English language proficiency.

Socioeconomic forces and social status. This category looks at the forces that exist in the social systems in the United States, which affected the women's social development. All of the women encountered various degrees of outside help, depending on their immediate social circle. In this section, I examine participants' current social support networks and their presumed social status on both a personal and professional level.

Cultural identity differences. The women were aware that many of the conflicts that they experienced after immigration were partially due to their negotiation of two cultures. Some of the women rationally described these differences and the difficulty of experiencing the emotional turmoil of cultural nostalgia for their native countries while trying to accept and to transition into American culture. In the following excerpt, Olga recalls encountering differences in cultural expectations of appearance:

So, my cultural identity, I remember when I first when I came here and on the weekend I was dressing up to go to the city, at those times I was living in San

> Francisco, and people who I was staying with were telling me that I cannot dress up like this. And I was asking, why? Because it is too bright, too noticeable… And I was telling yeah, I look pretty, and they were telling me, nobody in America dress like this unless they are going to some special party. So, this is what I learned. And I still do not understand this term casual dress up…

Many of the immigrant women admitted that they struggle to negotiate their own cultural perception of traditions and customs with those that are offered and celebrated in their host country. All of the women are attempting to hold onto their own specific experiences and beliefs in order to pass on their cultural values, traditions, and customs as well as their conception of ethnicity to the next generation. As Tanya said,

> Our family is pretty much stable in beliefs about education of kids, so like world leave and having such words for them, but like I mean so I do have some I don't know Ukrainian preferences that are about diet, not eating what she wants but having a lot of cook food like that, blah, blah, during the school day and not sandwiches for snack… I mean we all have a traditions like "once done with your work you can play now long"…

Some of the women have also experienced cultural identity differences in the workplace, as employer expectations and requirements are often related to differing cultural constructs surrounding professional identities. Natasha describes her own experiences with such cultural differences as follows:

> The cultural differences are huge. Here to be a leader, you have to have this go gold digger attitude. And you need to be more vocal and you need to promote yourself. Which is not like in our culture. We don't know how to do it, and you

> have to learn this skill here--how to go and tell them, "Yes, I can" because we wait while our management notice us and say you deserve it and we can take it. Here, you need to come and say I deserve it and I can prove it… It is very, very different thing… switch something in your head to do it. And once you do it, our women really capable of more…

As Natasha's excerpt shows, the women are adept at analyzing, acknowledging, and demonstrating awareness of the unique ways of the professional world among different cultures, and they desire to negotiate these differences for their own professional benefit. All of the participants were therefore negotiating their ideas regarding civil, social, and economic rights and obligations that accompany rightful membership in their societies. History and previous research shows that women in a majority of societies are involved and make meaningful contributions in economic, political, social, and cultural aspects of life (Adeyemi & Akpotu, 2004; Agbese, 2003; Indabawa, 1996; Olaoye-Williams, 1996). This study shows that all of the participants had inner strength and believed that their persuasion and determination in the face of obstacles would help them overcome further unseen barriers. As Olga said,

> Yes, I need, I have desire, I have strength, I have experience, I have everything. I need just someone who believe in me and who can bring me to place where I can utilize my knowledge and experience to the best.

No matter what their specific experiences have been living in the United States, all of the women consider themselves lucky to live here. All of the participants described the United States as one of the best places in the world to live.

Impact of immigration status. Right after migration, all of the participants reported initial confusion and stress due to the various legalization procedures. Seven of eight women thought that it would be an immediate acculturation process, in which they would not feel any difference in participating in another environment. All of the women thought that their personal, social, and professional life trajectories would only change for the better and that they would not encounter any setbacks. However, all of the women found out that the process of adjustment and acculturation to a very different life style has taken several years. Even though everyone had different beginnings and different reasons for immigrating, it was hard for all to adjust to new social and cultural norms and customs. Maria, who first migrated to Israel right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and then immigrated to the United States, explained these difficulties as follows:

> This is a different structure… my language Jewish language is different and I was always afraid of it, and it is similar to the Russian language… Therefore, it was easier and it differ from English because it was easier to live in it and in English you do not live in it… yes, it is social and here we can say you are separated from society and there you are a part of it… you are it is a saying, "you are one within the nation"… (translated from Russian)

Maria expressed her own personal challenges with her more secluded lifestyle in the United States. She noted that in the United States, the social acceptance and social atmosphere were more individual compared to the community atmosphere of Israel and the former Soviet Union.

Existence or absence of support networks. Three of the eight participants, Svetlana, Maria, and Masha, reported that they were lucky to find a Jewish community

for networking and support. These communities helped with their personal, and to some extent professional, adjustments. First, these organizations significantly impacted participants' sense of security and hope in future possibilities. Their relatives and community provided a strong support network and advised the women to follow paths that would provide them with the quickest employment opportunities. Moreover, the women could turn to immigrants in the support network for advice about navigating the employment market. In the excerpt below, Masha recalls the importance of a support network to her first steps in the new country:

> I came on everything already made… It is not like I came alone and I do not know anything here… I came here to my husband, who already had friends, who had work, and who already knew something… These friends all met through Jewish center where they all went to classes in English, computer, everything… because as I understand when they came here and they didn't know anybody, they would go to the Jewish center, introduced themselves, make friends, and then they would pull each other. If one person got a job, they were trying by any means to get job at that place to others because if you work at your first job, then you can continue with other employment more confidently… So they helped with classes and they help you with internships as well…

In addition, through electronic social networks (e.g., Facebook, Baraban.com, and so on) or encounters with new immigrants, participants heard the cases of both successfully employed immigrants and immigrants who were unable to find good employment and were not able to build prosperous careers. Masha said that, among Eastern European immigrants in California, baraban.com was one of the most known

sources for social outings, professional opportunities, helpful links, and meeting new mothers.

However, Masha did emphasize the importance of personal contacts among immigrants as the way of gathering needed information or seeking guidance. As she explained,

> I did have a lot of women friends who are come here but they do not know anybody… Even now, I am here 13 years and I can meet a Russian on the playground with the child and she can say you are the first Russian person who I met. I am always amazed but then I understand and I give them this information… like when you meet someone in your life, you are very quickly understand what kind of information they need…

Masha noted that just simple personal understanding and compassion can lift an immigrant woman's spirit. Seven of eight participants said that being around other people from Eastern Europe gave them cultural comfort and helped soothe their feelings of nostalgia. Also, all of the participants said that although they had met other people who spoke Russian, they did not know of any support systems especially for the Eastern European community. All of the women cherished personal encounters with others for the opportunity to share personal experiences and get someone else's advice. These unexpected social encounters enriched participants' overall experience and gave them insights into educational or employment systems. The women experienced a sense of comfort and positivity when around other people from the former Soviet Union. For example, Natasha expressed her need for a support network from her own culture:

> We kind of became host for big Russian crowd here. They actually made me a happier person. When I first got here and I didn't had any Russian friends, I was very, very, depressed. And I know many girls find friends in an American community and I do have, of course, friends in an American community, but I became a happier person once I found this Russian crowd. And I know some people don't need it, but for me it is necessary… And you can see around the house all of these matreshka dolls. I want to keep it for myself and my kids… because when I first moved here, I was horribly, horribly homesick.

Like Natasha, the majority of the women in this study noted that at one point in time they experienced psychological distress due to their personal, social, or professional struggles. These findings are similar to those in the literature, which notes that women immigrants generally indicate poorer social and economic well-being than men and therefore are more vulnerable to distress (Berry 2006; Aroian 2001; Waldorf 1995).

Personal and professional social status. All of the participants in this study received bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degrees prior to their migrations. Some of the women noted that they came from the middle class and that their parents had higher degrees as well. Three of eight women said that their parents were simple people and that they did not have much during their childhood.

After migration, some of the participants felt like they lost some of their social status, whereas others felt that they belonged to a higher socio-economic class. Dasha is an example of the latter:

> Since we moved here, we have moved up so much. I mean in the New York we were just "white trash" and here [Arizona], we worked so hard and we got a

> house, I mean, a trailer/mobile home, but still we got everything what we need and we have so much here and kids are doing great. And everything is going okay, so I don't think I want to move anywhere right now and start from zero… Now I am a hygienist, and it took me like five years and I got from dirt poor to middle class, so I did it all by myself and I took my family with me, so I would not be able to do it in Russia.

When Dasha compared her financial situation before and after migration to the U.S., the notion of a personal space that she could call home, even if that space is only a mobile home, made her feel like she belongs in a higher social class now.

Regardless of their status prior to migration, the majority of the women said that they had achieved a lot on their own in the new host country. Most described social and professional recognition as a source of personal satisfaction, as well as the impetus for the continuous determination, motivation, and courage that they needed on a daily basis.

At first, the majority of the women believed that they could easily restart their careers or succeed in their new chosen career fields. Although they believed that it would be easy to obtain desired job opportunities on their own, the women were met with personal, professional, and social barriers. Six of eight women noted that well-established Eastern European immigrant social networks would be helpful as sources of information about the employment market and about academic avenues for re-establishing existing or future career paths.

All of the women questioned the viability of their original career paths and their new career choices, their ability for professional growth, and their current job expectations. As Olga said,

> System is not working at all. It is not utilize our knowledge and our experiences as adults. It is like you here, this is up to you. You are on your own… so this system is not looking what you can do, what is your value, how… what you can give this country.

Therefore, given the turbulent personal, professional, and social trajectories in the United States, all of the women encountered and conquered visible and invisible challenges. On a personal level all of the women reported that some of the most visible challenges and direct barriers were their strong accents, personal insecurities, and family financial instabilities. Professionally, the majority of the women were faced with setbacks due to devaluation of their educational and work experience, their struggles to re-qualify or continue their prior career paths, and invisible challenges of limited choices regarding desired employment, as well as the burden of job insecurities and discrimination issues that limited their job opportunities. Finally, the social aspects of cultural differences and available social networks affected the women's social satisfaction. For these women, personal, social, and professional achievements were all necessary for deriving personal and professional satisfaction.

Personal, Professional, and Social Identity Evolution over Time and Participants' Plans for the Future

The participants' personal, professional, and social life trajectories were transformed after their migration through their personal and social interactions in the United States. This third domain highlights the evolution process of the women's personal, professional, and social identities, and the participants' plans for the future. First, all of the narratives illustrated the centrality of their professional identities, which

were intertwined with their personal and social identities. Second, these narratives illustrated the women's process of reimagining their personal, social, and professional life trajectories after migration to the United States. Third, the women's stories described the psychological outcomes of the evolution of each participant's personal, professional, and social identity. All of the found categories and the themes will be presented in the following sections.

Centrality of professional identity. All of the women noted in their narratives that professional development and achievements were important aspects of their personal and social identities. All stated that employment and successful career trajectories were necessary for defining themselves in their new world. The importance of personality traits and professional goals also came into focus during given narratives.

All of the women perceived themselves to be independent and to be a valuable financial provider for their immediate, and in some cases, extended families. Moreover, each woman valued and was striving to have a respectable job that would utilize her education, skills, and experiences. Further, all of the women wanted to enjoy a job in the field they had chosen with expectations of success. Specifically, they wanted to receive a justified compensation for doing a good job. As Olga shared, "I guess, it is always difficult and it is always easy. Because just to find something, just to find it is easy, but to find something that you love and you will be attached to it, it is difficult. So, to have job it is no trouble, but to have good job that you like, it is a big challenge."

All of the participants viewed employment and professional success as assets to their overall sense of well-being and to their self-esteem and self-preservation. They also linked employment and careers to social status because a career represented a visible

achievement outside of the nuclear family structure. Moreover, all of the women believed education is necessary for professional success.

In addition to the personal benefits of their education and career, the women who were mothers expressed the importance of their education and professional identities for their children and tied the reasons for and benefits of their migration decisions to their children's futures. This is partially a reflection of their culture: in Eastern European countries, family members are interdependent, and mutual respect and cooperation are very important across generations (Staykova, 2004; Robila, 2004). In addition, Eastern European immigrant parents tend to place a high value on education and its impact on self-confidence and on children's professional futures in the United States (Nesteruk, 2010; Nesteruk and Marks, 2009; Nesteruk, Marks, and Garrison, 2009). Participants were therefore striving to become the best role models they could be for their children and to teach them early about the benefits of hard academic work and its implications for their professional and financial futures. As Tanya shared,

> She [daughter] can know that she can go and work hard at college and she can chose what she wants, scholarships and everything. So, the rewards will come if she gets some. And I believe in any career that she chooses, but I still believe in education and what placed on education. It is a still part of Ukraine, you know… get an education than the job because of the age or something… While it is for self, self-esteem, for everything, position, satisfaction, stable something, reliable job… you know that you needed on the market.

As they discussed their professional identities, all of the participants described the personality characteristics that affected their post-migration personal and professional

choices. The most common traits that participants noted were the following: determination, motivation, dependability, respectability, and the ability to work hard. Some of the women were also ambitious and were looking for jobs with more responsibilities and decision-making opportunities. Although the women self-identified these traits, they were also apparent either in their explorations of the academic system, their search for employment opportunities, or in their management of their family affairs.

The women's other traits were social in nature. These included friendliness, eagerness, empathy, patience, and willingness to console newcomers. Olga recalled how these traits combined to influence her trajectory:

> I think what help me to do well is first that I do not give up and a, people who first were, people in government, ah, people who should help refugee, they telling me that I should go and look for unqualified work and this is what would be my future, and I said no. And I start just searching around and I was just lucky to meet people who actually were guiding me. It was not people in this system who helping refugee. It was people outside, who actually go through this system and they have their problems, and their obstacles and they learn from someone. So this is how they were guiding me, this is how I found this program in college; I found this my first job

Re-imagining of personal, social, and professional life trajectories.

Evolution of personal life trajectories. All of the women in this study migrated to the United States from 1999 to 2009, after the collapse of the USSR. Their ages vary from 22 to 55 years old. Three of the participants migrated to the United States with their husbands, four as a fiancés of United States citizens, and one as a political refugee. Five

of the women had children prior to their migration. Currently, only one woman does not have a child. Participants of this study were therefore at different stages in their personal relationships at the time of immigration.

Emotions towards and attitudes about immigration. When they migrated, all of the women experienced different stages of psychological distress. All suffered various personal losses due to their immigration, including close ties with families and friends, socio-economic status, professional careers or educational status, and their cultures. The participants therefore questioned their lifestyle expectations when faced with the reality of the immigration process and the cultural differences they experienced. Natasha, Tanya, and Olga experienced more stress and depression due to social isolation, whereas Dasha and Alena had easier adjustment periods.

Four of the participants said that even though they were adjusting to their new cultural surroundings, they still were missing something inside their soul. All of the participants said that they experienced, to some degree, feelings of nostalgia. The effects of acculturation are complex and all of the participants had concerns regarding their personal and social outcomes. Some of the women said that even to this day after a few years of living in the United States, they still compare features of their original and their host societies. In their narratives, some of the women speculated about what their lives would have been like if they had stayed behind. For example, Dasha, who was initially not optimistic about her immigration because of her previous life experiences, spoke positively about her current reality and her desires for her children when she thought about staying in her native country:

> Oh, if I would stay in my native country, gosh, I would make everything possible for them to come here. And that is why we here. That was my main goal for my children to grow up here and have a better start. When I was 30, I still was a zero, pretty much, did not know much. Came here and started from zero. They are going to be already so much better than me and I already have big plans for them. I mean, not like I have a factory, but much better.

Some participants had returned to their countries to visit family and expressed surprise in their feelings. These women reported that they could not believe the conditions of life, the available personal and monetary accommodations, the services, and the hospitality in their countries of origin. They had unpleasant reactions to forgotten realities of their former lives. Svetlana told about her yearly experience visiting the Ukraine in these words:

> I am visiting Ukraine once a year because my daughter is still there. But it is so different now… It changed. I am afraid now to walk in the dark, and the customer service at the store are horrible, and the language. The quality of life is different. You remember things in your mind that are no longer there. People choose to remember only good. This is the mood of survivor, and when reality is opposite to the dream, it is hard. You know when you are here and you have everyday access to the fresh fruits and vegetables and there you need … I know what they have … I am not regretting it… Overall, the life here and people interactions compare to our country, they are much better. In Ukraine they were looking at you with the question why are you still alive… even though you know so much, and your memory is still working… (translated from Russia)

It should be noted that two of the participants have not returned to their countries of origin but did reveal their hope that they would be able to do so one day.

As can be seen in Dasha's and Svetlana's narratives, despite the many personal changes and the emotional difficulty that the immigrant women experienced, some found satisfaction and positive outcomes from their migration choices. In fact, the negative aspects of migration had less impact on some of the participants if they were offset by positive happenings in their lives. For example, Olga, Masha, Maria, Natasha, and Tanya focused on the improved living environment and commodities that they found in the United States. These participants shared pre-migration memories of everyday struggles with shortages in food and basic living supplies and with financial instability. Olga, Svetlana, Alena, and Dasha migrated because of continuous political and economic turbulences, ecological disasters, and the failure of the health care system, all of which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Olga explained,

> I think, yes, I gain ability to have everyday hot water, to drive on good roads, and ability to go to the store where everything is clean and sale person who will not yell at me because I did some mistake… They will actually smile at me… and it does not matter what I do. And this is a lot… And also, ecology… Ecology in Ukraine is terrible, and this is a big factor of declining health in Ukraine. And people do not realize that Chernobyl, how effective is Chernobyl for all lives in Ukraine for all these years. And I know it as a person who actually was involved in ecology there. I want my kids to be healthy and I am happy to be here.

In addition to the physical benefits of immigration, some women noted that they experienced positive psychological benefits and could now exercise more of their

personal identity characteristics then they could prior to migration. Some women found out after their immigration that they now had the opportunity to re-invent their personal dreams. For example, when Tanya experienced some disconnection regarding her career aspirations, she explored her uncertainties and searched deep inside her to find out what makes her happy. She realized that she was passionate about music and horses and found numerous other things that she wanted to try. She understood that to fully understand herself and create an identity for herself, she needed to try. She decided that she wanted to have personal space while being a mother, woman, and professional. Similarly, as Masha expressed in the excerpt below, she was constantly reminded not to discount the value of personal wishes and dreams:

> Here I am thankful to America because you can achieve a lot… When I was in Russia, I never thought that I could learn to play piano, ride horses, take yoga…Here you can do it all, but maybe it comes with age when you start looking at your life and analyze what do you want to do and discover all of your possibilities… All that you like to do…

Therefore, in some cases the women felt a greater sense of worth, a sense of freedom to make personal choices, a sense of self-determination, and the emergence of confidence due to the personal journeys they were taking. Some of the women said that sometimes they unconsciously compared their dreams prior to migration with their post migration ones and tried to reconcile them in their minds. All of the women said that family is always very important for them and that they were striving to create their own perfect families in this new land of opportunities.

The emotional need for balance. Although family was crucial to the women, personal balance was also necessary as they tried hard to justify all of the changes they had to make and as they negotiated personal and cultural accommodations. For all of the participants, it was a difficult journey, and all of them admitted that finding a personal, social, and professional balance within their new environments was harder than they anticipated. Often their desires for professional recognition clashed with personal desires. One participant, Alena, felt that at this point of time she was looking forward more to expanding her family than building her professional career. As Alena said,

> My identity… I definitely can say that I feel better here, like emotionally, physically and feel more confident here. Even I know I am immigrant here and maybe have some adjustments and like I said have problems with language, but I still feel very confident in my future, my career that's I can do here… maybe I am not so a little bit motivated only… like right now, I was going to do it [translate diploma], go look for new job and then I think I want to.. I am more want to have a new baby than the job…

Support from husbands. As mentioned earlier, four of the eight participants came to the United States as a fiancée of an American citizen. One of the women knew her husband prior to her migration as they dated and visited each other for more than two years. Other women's relationships were relatively new; these women went into their marriages with the hope of mutual respect and support. However, the level of support participants found from their husbands varied considerably. Some women's husbands encouraged them to follow their dreams. Other women noted that after migration, they discovered that their husbands wanted them to stay at home and become housewives.

Their husbands were frustrated by their desires to have professional and social lives outside their home environment. Some women were surprised to learn that their American husbands did not make enough money not only to support them, but also to pay their green card fees.

One such situation is Tanya's experience with an unsupportive husband. Tanya's husband was completely unsupportive of her decision to pursue a career in the medical field and tried to influence her decisions, which resulted in a troubled marriage. She also felt betrayed by her husband when he lied about their family's financial situation and her role in it. However, she was able to collect her strength, stand up for herself and her daughter, and file for divorce. She moved forward, pursuing a degree and looking for a job. Tanya proved that she has a lot of self-esteem, perseverance, will-power, and self-confidence by believing in herself and in her choice to follow her dream:

> You know what experience have shown me and people from outside tell me that I am strong. It builds up until you know my divorce because my husband put a lot of stuff on me: bankruptcy and left without any cent and being in school… When he was going down, he took me down because he was putting and getting loans and he put a lot of them on me because I did not know it here in America because I was not knowledgeable how it worked, he used me and he is native, blah, blah. He put me through the bankruptcy when we were divorcing, so it is not a good start to start after divorce… car, everything, and I went through hard situation. It does make your life easier… Probably you hold onto your values even stronger. I do not know, ah, like a song, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger…But you know it happens and you think about it and looking back, oh wow, I did it.

> Definitely not the weak one, but I do not want to be a hero; I want a simple life… I just want a future for my child. That is all… so those experiences definitely tell you that the women should be independent in any culture. And absolutely sure in America because here you have to pay absolutely for everything and rely on…

In contrast with Tanya's marriage, Natasha found support from her husband that enabled her to deal with her personal struggles about migration and to move forward. Natasha noted that her main struggle was between moving forward with her personal relationship and get married or continuing with her prospective professional and social trajectories within her country of origin. She desperately wanted her personal life to continue to blossom, but she became terrified that she would lose her personal identity and her professional drive and opportunities in a new social environment in the United States. Although some of her worries materialized, she emphasized that thanks to her husband's supportive relationship, she navigated various uncertainties because they encountered them together, as a couple. As Natasha recalled,

> Everybody back home, even my teacher from the journalism department, she was like my biggest support from school. She saw all of this talent in me…She said, the women career may seem to you as important now, but for women, the first is your private life. I didn't understand her at that time, but I do agree with her now truly, and then I was like 23…and then once I decided to come, Chris [husband] was helping with everything he could. I didn't drive, I was so insecure about so many things. He helped me to sign for ESL classes, and teachers there were super supportive and academic adviser there was so supportive, both telling me, "You are so smart, you are so easy, outgoing, you are just going to be doing great and

> we will help you." … I just needed the confidence boost. I just needed to hear, Yes, you are good enough. You can do it… For me what I learned is not give up, try again… and don't get discourage… because it's too easy to give up and then you don't have any option to pursue. Whatever you have, don't give up and eventually you get it.

All of the women in this study were married before or right after their migration to the United States. As can be seen in the data presented in this discussion, some of the women were thankful to their husbands for their immediate support, while others struggled with feelings of betrayal. According to the literature, the most significant support for married immigrants was their spouse (Renner et al. 2012).

In summary, all of the participants saw some changes in their personal ideologies and the personal trajectory of their lives. The women's ideas and perceptions of their priorities were evolving. All of the participants noted that their children were the main inspiration for their current and future personal achievements. All of the women also felt that their personal identity was the reason why they were striving to create feelings of warmth and happiness within their families, to understand and choose what is wrong and right in their marital relationships, to pursue hobbies that gave them a recreational space for self-realization, and to always find strength to overcome obstacles. These women felt that since their migration, they were able to go forward with their personal desires for a bright future. Some of the women were able to save and work through their existing relationships, while others searched search for happier ones. All of the participants noted that they wanted to be and feel like a happy woman, not only in their domestic environments, but also in all senses of the word, as a loving wife and mother, and as a

successful, independent person. Personal and social relationships were necessary for the majority of the participants and positive aspects of their personal lives were gladly shared with all family members.

Since their migration, all of the women had accrued more knowledge and clarity about themselves and their social surroundings, broken some of their unrealistic perceptions, and learned to be active in their life transitions. In other words, they had become more empowered. The women immigrants pushed against the grain, defied complacency, and reached for their dreams. They showed courage in moving forward despite personal and social obstacles. Scared and uncertain, they developed their own paths in a new social environment.

Evolution of professional trajectories and associated emotions. When migrating, participants expected to follow their pre-migration career trajectories. Immediate career choices were based partially on educational background and previously held professional experiences. Some of the participants came to the United States with the desire to continue their professional trajectories and without having any ideas of the reality of the United States employment market. After migrating, the women were surprised by the intricacies of re-qualification, the requirements of minimal use of language, the application processes, and the salary structure, to name a few. They also had to evaluate their own needs and wants within their nuclear family units and social settings. For the majority of participants, their first steps in building their professional trajectories in the United States were full of sadness and unanticipated sorrow.

At the time of the interviews, all of the participants were at various stages of their professional identity and career development. Some of the participants viewed their pre-

migration professional careers as a more accurate self-description of their identities, while others saw their opportunities to develop new careers as a second chance for personal definition. Only one participant was able to continue the professional career she had started prior to migration.

Three of the eight women who had a stable and successful career path prior to their migration have had a hard time letting go of their prior career identities. Natasha choose to pursue the same career path that she had begun in the Ukraine by adjusting her educational background by taking new college courses in the same career field. Olga tried to align her prior professional achievements and experiences with the hope of securing a suitable position in a government office by going back to the university and receiving a second master's degree. Her hope is that a degree from a university in the United States will help her to be suitable for a supervisory position within government agencies. Svetlana was able to partially maintain her professional identity by working closely for doctors of psychology in a babysitting position for their children. As she mentioned, she is able to keep her mind sharp and her knowledge reinforced by discussing cases and giving some practical advice to the practicing psychologists. In contrast, four of the women were able to move on from their prior career identities because of new opportunities they found in the United States.

Loss of career and associated identity. As discussed earlier, some of the women's career expectations were challenged by the realities of immigration, lack of recognition of prior experience and education, and the different structure of the employment market in the United States, all of which hindered the women's ability to continue with the same professional trajectories. As Olga explained,

> When I applied for my refugee status and I was granted asylum, I went to special place that kind of work with refugee and they tell me you have to have job… They say to me, you can start as a cleaning dishes in the fast food restaurant and I was very upset, and I said are you joking? I have my degree, my experience; I am not somebody from the high school. And they said to me that every refugee here started like this. And they said that nobody would value your education or your experience. They said you need do everything from bottom. And of course, it was big hit for me. I was totally unprepared for this. I was totally disagreeing with this position. Because I know that I can do thing much more better than cleaning dishes. I was not mentally prepared to do this job at all. So I need, I was putted in the position where I need to take care of myself and start searching and navigating what can I do to do best for me because I do not want to be in the position where I would have depression, regret. And living refugee in America would not be better than living life in Ukraine at this point…

Olga wasn't alone in her pre-migration achievements or in her post-migration disappointment with available employment options. All of the women in this study held a university degree from their country of origin and derived their identity to a large extent from their professional status and occupational achievements. Their narratives show that their family and friends who were left behind in their country of origin expected these women to be successful in the financial, social, and personal aspects of their lives. Previous research shows that immigrants with higher education have been relatively successful economically due to their ability to use their skills to some degree in related fields (Vinokurov et al., 2000; Remennick, 2007;

Yakushko & Cronister, 2005). However, other studies show that immigrants who had achieved high professional status in the former Soviet Union were more susceptible to psychological distress, due to the possibility that they might never reach their professional aspirations and the professional levels that they had obtained before migration (Birman & Trickett, 2001). Thus, this study supports current findings, as two of the women noted that they held successful professional careers prior to emigration and were still seeking opportunities to realize professional success in the United States. In the excerpt above, Olga shared her frustration with her employment search and with the process of establishing her desired career path in the United States compared with her previous leadership opportunities in Ukraine. Her personal distress was a combination of multiple factors, including gender, professional experience in the United States, and her age. She noted that she had a limited time to re-establish herself professionally and was notably disappointed at her current achievements. However, she still hopes for a bright future and the achievement of her American dream.

Re-establishing pre-migration professional identities. Depending on their social support, financial support and needs, and available opportunities, some of the women, such as Maria, were able to navigate the unknown educational and employment systems and pursue careers that helped them re-establish their pre-migration professional identities. Maria stated that her persuasiveness and determination helped her to secure a couple of teaching positions, and recently she was able to retire after fulfilling her minimal work-retirement requirements. In the following excerpt, Maria describes her own road to self-realization in her desired field:

> When I came here, everybody was telling, "You have such great education and you are very smart… Why do you need to teach here? They do not pay you much, they have a lot of tests, and the children behavior is not the best."… But I was teaching computer science in former Soviet… I also taught them in Israel as well… But I was saying that I can make as much money as I need by doing what I know… being a teacher…I went to work, but to complete the test…, it took me 3 years… Mathematics test took me two years to pass, and writing three years, and reading three and half years. So, from the moment I came, it took me approximately three and half years to get a teaching license. (translated from Russian)

Other women, like Svetlana, were unable to re-establish their previous professional identities, but were able to re-create, to some degree, the positive emotions, job satisfaction, and social empowerment in their current jobs that they had experienced previously. As Svetlana explained,

> I couldn't, wouldn't, work further as a doctor… so I found some easier job for myself as a personal nanny. It is a common job here for the immigrants. I worked in one family for seven years and then I was introduced to two families, two sisters, who had two children each. So, with my educational background, I was hired on the spot. I was alternating days between families. I would watch kids for few hours a day and then for extra pay, I would clean and cook. Both of the families are work in medical fields. I am still working there even now. Their mothers sometimes ask me for professional help… (translated from Russian)

Svetlana recalled that she experienced satisfaction and increased self-esteem, confidence, and self-worth when she was asked to share her professional doctoral expertise. She also stayed positive by keeping her finger on the pulse of new medical breakthroughs and their applications.

New careers and new personal definitions. Some of the women who were at the start of their careers faced the reality of relinquishing dreams regarding employment and instead made compromises. They were obliged to re-evaluate and modify their career goals and expectations as they faced unsatisfactory employment options. All of the women noted that their first priorities were their desire to provide for their children and to define their personal career wishes. A few of the participants explained that they had lost touch with their former education and career identities due to their new surroundings and their prolonged absence from their career fields.

With the passage of time, some of the women accepted their employment circumstances and the need to move forward due to economic hardships and were actually looking forward to their success in their newly chosen careers. These participants noted that their previous education and experiences, combined with their new career paths, were giving them more personal satisfaction, confidence, knowledge, and the desire to prove themselves even more. Tanya was one of the women who found a renewed sense of professionalism and career growth in her new occupation as a dental hygienist. She felt that her teaching degree from the Ukraine has helped her to communicate more easily and more efficiently with each client that she sees in her current profession. She takes pride in her new professional identity:

> You know, today I had a family--a mother and two kids--and she was told that I explained to her and in each particular case, I showed to her what idea and what is right and wrong… And she said, "Wow, nobody told me how to brush my teeth." So I believe because of my degree [teacher's degree from Ukraine], I am strong in not only doing my job but teaching people in how to do a good job at home, so I really spend extra couple of minutes to explain to people because I see them only twice a year… so if I teach them correctly, they come back to me, and it would be an easy job, and I'll be happy at what I see and all of the benefits from it. If only clean their teeth but do not show them or teach them how to do it, is only twice a year and without being told how to do it, they would not have this problem solved and have problem in their month. So I always want to do a good job, correctly.

Some of the women had accepted the requirements and restrictions of the United States employment market and were determined to secure employment at any cost. Often that cost was further education. During the search period, a majority of the women took English language (ESL classes) and some proceeded even further with available associate degrees or various certifications. One of the participants enrolled in a university and graduated with a master's degree in education. Completing their education gave hope to the immigrant women that they might obtain better employment. These women also experienced psychological benefits, such as a sense of worth and feelings of strength, from knowing their final destination and from being occupied on their way there.

The range of emotions evoked by the job search. All of the women experienced a range of negative and positive emotions during their process of seeking employment. Their negative feelings were based on their experiences with unknown employment

structures and with the requirements of the hiring process. These women experienced sadness, regret, disappointment, frustration, and depression while trying to overcome their fear of failure and rejection in pursuit of desired full-time employment. They were disappointed and saddened by the lack of recognition of their professional achievements, especially if they put time and effort into further education. Participants recognized that one factor in being denied desired opportunities was their heavy accent, and they chafed at the injustice of this. For some women, their anger and disappointment mounted over time until they felt as though there was no escape and no other options. A few women reported that they lacked confidence as a result of unnoticed progress in their professional trajectories. Natasha's description of her post-immigration professional trajectory is an example of the range of emotions that many of the women experienced:

> I just felt not good enough. So, I was trying to think, what can I do? I was getting really very depressed about a year ago… The Christmas before the previous year, it was the most hardest because it felt like I hit the plateau… Baby was the one thing, but besides the baby, there should be something for my career. I can't keep working like this… Because MCTV… whatever I accomplished is good, but it's already accomplished and I need to keep moving… They can't afford to, they can't afford to… I'm part time there, so just up to 20 hours and also doing just one show monthly. It's basically what it comes up to and it doesn't come up more so that's of course… Beside this, I am working for the Ross store, just doing their money in the morning, just doing their books and wherever… But still, that's not why I got my master's education so I can work for Ross department and stuff like that… So, I decided to go back to school...but I didn't wanted to change my major

too much. So what I decided to do is I took a class for video editing because it's more technical part but of the same area.

The women who had lived in America the longest recognized more clearly their professional limitations due to their age and accent. Some of the women felt that they could still practice and give advice based on their professional experiences. Consequently, these women tried to align their previously earned professional identities with less-stressful jobs. The feelings of low self-esteem, down-sized careers, and social perception by other immigrants were tied to professional identity. Even so, some women felt the need for the professional recognition that they strived for before the migration.

Gaining satisfaction from their own journey and from what they had achieved so far was harder for some of the participants than for others. Putting their career goals on hold gave women uneasy feelings of regret and sadness, but mostly all of the participants reported that they still were determined to prove their capabilities. Further, some of the women noted that they have not given up their hopes and dreams of finding the perfect careers, but in order to have a financial support, they had accepted temporary jobs. Masha strongly voiced her desire for further career advancements in order to reach professional satisfaction. She said,

> Really…um… this is career is not my desired one… but I do look at this job as a stepping stone that helps me grow professionally as well as the salary that I earn. I am happy with this job for now… So I am doing all of the enjoyable stuff after work. So if I would change my job today, I would still be working in the same field but maybe with the bigger career jump. It is just 10 years in one company…

People saying that it is time to think about something else… It is time to make decision if I want more of manager responsibilities or more of technical growth

Other women, like Dasha, have learned to find some satisfaction regardless of their occupations. As Dasha said,

It was 2006 when I started, so 7 years ago… They did not had physical therapist assistant certification, but the dental classes were starting within next month, so she signed me up for dental assistant. So that is how I started up in the dental field. And then I got into hygiene school and got that, and started working with hygienist… And I hated it at first, like cleaning the teeth? Ugh… teeth I hate that…you know... Just you get kind of numb… you know… you have to learn to be satisfied with what you have, and if you want something more, it's fine. First thing you need to be satisfied or otherwise you never be happy…

Despite the many challenges of securing satisfactory employment, all of the women looked forward to finding a perfect occupation. Some noted that they were not searching for significant career advances and leadership positions, but rather were looking for a place where they could feel happy and satisfied while earning a comfortable salary. In addition, the women described opportunities to experience various positions as helpful to the process of learning about themselves. As Alena said,

Yeah, I applied once and a few month nothing happens. I applied second time and they get me an interview … and I get hired. I feel, I feel like here, like people respect me, I became a front and back supervisor, so I am kind of in charge, so life is good… I was looking at assistant manager, for example, and thinking do I want to be her? And then I realized, I do not want to be her because she works

more hours, has more responsibilities, and it is just more difficult. I am tired at my position; I will be more tired at her place. And I do not want to be making career in retail. So what I understand, I do not want to be in retail…

In summary, some of the women were able to hold onto their professional goals and pre-migration trajectories, while others had to re-evaluate their professional hopes, dreams, and careers. All of the participants found some comfort in their current professional development and post-migration accomplishments. Also, all of the women felt that their professional identity and careers do provide them with independence, a feeling of self-efficiency, and a feeling of self-worth, while showcasing their strength and their ability to achieve and reach their dreams. These women felt that their stories of overcoming obstacles and their continued efforts to climb to the top of their desired career ladder gave them courage and respect among their family and friends. To the women, positive shifts in occupations and working environments meant their acceptance in the organizations and recognition by employers and co-workers of their professional abilities. Those women who were able to secure full-time employment with competitive salaries, without or with educational re-certification, experienced greater professional satisfaction. Despite their professional dissatisfaction, the women who are still struggling to find secure employment maintain hope and believe in better possibilities in the future.

Preferred social relationships. All of the women reported that they had social interactions with members of the broader migration and non-migration communities. But the majority of women found that they prefer more intimate social relationships with immigrants or immigrants' descents from Europe. As Masha said,

> I never thought about it… I have Russian and American friends… I can very easy adapt to situations; therefore, I would embrace any… I found out that I am much easier find friends among Europeans… I feel the comfort more to the European people… I feel like they have similar soul.

Moreover, some of the women noted that even in the present when interacting with their new social acquaintances, they felt individual disassociation. As Maria said,

> It is hard to explain, but this belonging is in you. But here you are separated. You can be in the company and you may talk to them and they may bring you cupcakes and you may have friends… different (translated from Russian)

Although some of the participants knew that there are a lot of people from Eastern Europe in both California and Arizona, three out of four women participants from Arizona had not found common places or social connections within the immigrant or non-immigrant communities. They still felt isolated and connected mostly to their family within the United States and abroad.

Family culture. In fact, the majority of the women's close social surroundings were the most enhanced by the richness of their immediate and/or extended families' emotional support and advice and their own family responsibilities. These women were the initiators of their family's new future. They felt that it was their responsibility to set the example in an environment that was completely unknown to them. The importance of the immediate family unit and of the women's need to be a persistent and prominent role model within their families emerged as prominent themes in this study. From a cultural standpoint, these women had to set the example for their children and grandchildren, as

immigrant women who succeeded in building a new life in their host country. Dasha explained her efforts to be a role model of cultural identity in her family as follows:

> I did not have a cultural identity. I grow up as a zero culture, zero revision, zero directions, and zero family orientation. I mean, our culture was communism, pioneers, marching, all that stuff when I was… and then when it all crushed and now none. So this is how I hold myself in more individual life. I create my own. Kind of my husband maybe contributes more to the family and I am just learning from him. Because I never had family like that so, looking movies, and whatever, you know, maybe I can find what the family look like and I am doing.

Dasha was the only one out of the eight participants who stated that she did not hold any cultural or family values prior to her migration to the United States. As the above quote indicates, she did not have good family relationships and guidance from parents or grandparents. Her memories of her childhood were very vague and unpleasant. By the time she got married the second time and had a second baby, she was drawing from an imaginary world of television to determine what her family culture should be. Similarly, Dasha was the only woman who said that she did not struggle with cultural identity confusion as she readily adopted the visible culture in the United States and relied upon her husband's guidance to determine l cultural beliefs and family values.

Balancing cultures. The most common positive notion among the majority of the women was their desire to maintain balance between their national cultural identity and the new culture of the United States. Most of the women mentioned that they are evaluating their personal and social principles, beliefs, and desires and are trying hard to find a spectrum in which they are comfortable with compromising something from the

past in order to accept something new. Some do not want to compromise their values or belief system but rather prefer to seek only what can benefit them from the United States' culture. All of the participants said that their cultural and social expectations at the beginning of their journey were to some degree unrealistic and it was taking time to adjust to their sociocultural context and to therefore experience a positive acculturation.

Participants' identity perceptions regarding their nationality, as American, as belonging to their home country, or as both, were reflected in their feelings about and satisfaction with the new culture. All of the participants noted that they continued to vacillate between their pre- and post-migration cultural identities. They also suggested that their identities now include a combination of the following variables: ethnic, racial, gender, cultural, political, and socio-economic status and upbringing.

Instead of living in two different cultures, some participants were combining both to make their own kind of culture. Natasha tried to explain her own balancing act:

> And the TV show is a big part that I try to promote American culture to Russian and Ukraine and promote Russian and Ukrainian culture over here… I am an always advocate between those cultures… positive sides of these cultures so that people can actually know something better… Ok, so for me, I would say that maybe my national identity is a little bit stronger now because you are going through phases: like I am so Russian and then you go like maybe I am more Americanized more now… and then you go back. I am Americanized but I am more Russian now… So it's hard because it comes and goes. But I understand there are a points in national identity that make me much more stronger candidate for many jobs because of our qualities and characteristics of us that we are hard

> workers, we like, we say gold diggers, … at least we want to became gold diggers because we are know that no one is going to bring anything on the plate to us, we know that if you want to make it happen, you have to make it happen for yourself.

All of the participants in this study vibrantly discussed their pride for their Eastern European identities, mostly described as Russian. They expressed this cultural identity and ethnic pride through positive social and cultural sentiments, including memories of cultural traditions, holidays, history, and celebrations with their family and friends. At the same time they admitted that they were also influenced by American culture. However, some of the women noticed that adoption of some American traits was accompanied by criticism from their immigrant community.

The importance of social connections for the job search. The participants' social and cultural identities and their perceptions of being immigrant women have also been affected by their experiences with race, class, and gender through their prior- and post-migration experiences. The majority of the women noted that they all knew about the intersections between race, class, gender and social capital in the former Soviet Union countries. As Alena stated, "Ye, in Russia and Ukraine you need to be beautiful, you need to know right people then it make happen and you get a good job".

But in their experiences within the United States, class and gender differences were much more hidden. Five of the eight participants noted that they have experienced how social capital, race, ethnicity, social and family connections, and gender were important factors in their employment searches and professional experiences. Tanya summarized her feelings in the following quote:,

> So I would say that to acquired realization that I had in the last couple of month that I am being judge that I am not being an American and what I want… to became equal. And for us for minority, women and if you doing adaption and everything it is even more harder…

Similarly, Olga commented on the importance of connections and the role of social capital in the excerpt below:

> But I learned here [United States] system works the same as in Ukraine. If you know someone, it is much easy to find job, they just bring you inside. So I guess if I can meet someone who works in the place and just bring me inside, this will be helping. So I did not find this person yet. But this is looks like here the system works also.

In post-Soviet Union countries, the differential treatment among social classes is more visible and is a known fact, whereas in the United States, socially differential treatment and social class differences are not as overt or as discussed, yet inequity is sensed. Natasha recalled her memories of social class realities in Ukraine as follows:

> I feel like I couldn't go to the university of Shevshenko, I didn't believe that I could because we felt like I am from poor family and we don't get there… you need to have all of these connections….

All of the women recounted that their first post-migration social interactions were more difficult than they anticipated. However, all of the women reported that they were learning to not give up and to continue pursuing their dreams. Although the majority of the participants were still far from realizing their goals, they were increasingly motivated

to move forward and search for available opportunities. Alena argued for the importance of believing in possibilities when she described her own experience:

> I think do not close like your possibilities, opportunities, because when I started to look for a job, I was crying. I thought I was going to wash toilets in McDonalds. That is how I believed I am not qualify for anything. I am not speaking language… And just be open minded; believe that you can do more, because lots of immigrants here and we all do well, I think, from Europe.

Although all of the women reported that they were to some degree unsatisfied with their current personal, professional, and social trajectories, they were unwilling to give up and were determined to move forward. Tanya captured this aspect of cultural transition and adaptation in this quote: "Or we could be in Ukraine now. I mean you always have a choice to go back to Ukraine if you complain much. But nobody does it."

In summary, all of the women were negotiating their cultural and social identities within the bigger multicultural reality of the United States. Some of the participants missed the familiarity of a cultural and social environment where they were comfortable with themselves, while others reported that only now they were able to define themselves. However, all of the participants noted that they were working through their feelings and pointed out that they have a desire to learn more about the United States' cultural norms and way of life. The importance of the social aspect of life and their need for social acceptance was noted through all of the narratives. All of the women felt that they could achieve social relationships through their professional careers and personal relationships with immigrant and non-immigrant members of the society.

Looking to the future. The majority of the participants noted that it was hard for them to navigate their own feelings about what their next step in their personal, professional, and social adaptation should be. Some of the women still wonder if they made the right decision in any one of these trajectories. Their hope for the future is to be more conscious of what they want to achieve. As Masha pointed out, "You need to know what you want and then you will meet people and get the needed information." In their narratives, women mentioned what they wanted regarding future employment and support. They also mentioned the need to stay positive and the need to prioritize, all of which are discussed below.

Future employment. Because some of the women supplemented their prior experience and education by returning to school to learn new skills, they felt that in the future, their increased knowledge of multiple subjects would assist them with securing desired employment. As Natasha said,

> I would continue doing my 180 View and also do some video editing for them and that would give me a new opportunity to start completely new and different paths. And it's cool because I already have my producing experience behind me. I am going to be a much better editor because I do have those ideas how it's suppose to look like. Now I will have ability to physically make it happen to know which buttons to push to became fast… So hopefully, if I'll be doing that, then I will have much better career opportunities for me, and then I can go to other channels and hopefully get a regular, 40 hours for week job where they pay normal money and feel like a human. You know what I mean…I really like my idea of my TV show and I think it would be very useful if it can be done with

> bigger budget and like really done for real for the big TV. It could be interesting, very successful… so I still hoping in the future it will happen… so I am not given up.

However, although some of the women took steps towards a career change by acquiring other degrees or certificates, they had not secured their desired full-time careers. Currently, some of the women are facing professional and economic shortcomings, but they still have hope for future opportunities and good fortune. Two of the participants who received their associate's degrees in dental hygiene were looking forward to securing the full time employment that would justify their decision for current career choice. As Tanya said, "And it is alright. I just need to find my doctor, who will be open to the minority…will see."

Future support. The women are also continuing to search for emotional support in dealing with personal, professional, and social disconnections. Olga emphasized the importance of finding support to supplement one's inner strength in the following excerpt:

> I hope that my future… in my future I can build kind of better career, and I still hope for that. And, but, but I guess your inside strength and, well, this is what moving you and when you looking for opportunities, opportunities will come to you. But not everybody can be strong, so if people are not strong, they actually need support, they need good support and guidance here.

Some of the women, like Svetlana, look forward to family providing this necessary support in the future. Svetlana stated that she is missing a big piece of her personal happiness without her daughter and her grandson close to her. Her future plans

and wishes all evolve around them: “My goal for them [daughter’s family] is to come here… I hope and pray that it would be very soon.” (translated from Russian)

Participants expected that future opportunities to explore personal needs and desires, cherish their family environments, and find social support would allow them to realize their deepest wishes for future happiness.

Prioritizing trajectories. The intertwined nature of personal, social, and professional trajectories was noted by all of the participants, yet each woman had made personal choices to prioritize one trajectory over another. Alena’s statement below shows what priority she has chosen for now and what her future plans are:

> Yeah, I want to finally translate my diploma. And Nadia gave me idea when I am going to have baby to stay home and maybe take some class. I want to go for book- keeping, accounting, something like this… so I don’t have any skills to work there, so while I want to take some class and then maybe to find some part-time job when I am going to be with baby, then finally some full-time with accounting if I like it…So this is my plan.

Although they were prioritizing trajectories for now, all of the women stated that in the future they want to be successful in all aspects of their life trajectories.

In summary, although past experiences that had hindered them were hard to forget, all of the women were eager to learn from their experiences, to overcome their difficulties, and to move forward with their grand future plans.

Suggestions.

All of the women agreed that it would be helpful for immigrants to figure out their plans of assimilation into the new culture before they migrate. All of the participants

recalled losing time and wasting money while trying to figure out how to proceed with their education and career development. All of the women said that they were terrified of their post-migration reality, and only a couple of them knew what was at stake after their arrival to the United States. The economic, educational, employment, and political systems in America were not clear to any of them, and most felt frustrated and blindsided in regards to correct and incorrect educational and employment choices. The pressure associated with these choices and the incompetence the women felt led some to fall into depression. Such feelings could be alleviated with help from others and with a plan from the beginning for assimilation. As Natasha explains,

> I think it's very important to understand from very beginning not to waste your time and to understand what do you want to do. Because I see so many girls and I was the same way. Well, the first we are very lost. We don't know what to do with ourselves … If there was some kind of service where you can go and get some kind of advice some counseling, something, who you can talk to and understand what your options are… people who would look at your education and your work experience and told you, "This are the areas where you can utilize all of that." Because we just don't know what to do with ourselves, and very often we just get a low pay jobs, literally just go to retail… and we don't have to. We are much better than that we could do… but we can't even think of options. So once you understand what it is that you want, if you need to re-train yourself, get at it right away.

Natasha's emphasis on the need for community help and services was echoed in all of the narratives. Throughout their immigration journeys, the majority of the women

in this study had received helpful hints and advice from someone within the immigrant community. Later, some of them provided information or advice to other new immigrants who were seeking help.

Therefore, the women recommended having a one-stop place where they would be treated according to their cultural knowledge and customs. Professional, face-to face explanations about differences among the employment and educational systems in the United States and Eastern Europe would benefit all immigrants from Eastern Europe by saving them time and money, not to mention improving their psychological well-being. Specifically, knowledge about academic credit and transferring earned degrees would give immigrants time and options. Such a place would also provide needed acknowledgment of previous work experiences and help with securing jobs.

In addition, as Svetlana says in the quote below, to survive and to thrive in the United States, immigrant women need individual treatment because of their various backgrounds.

> I believe EE immigrant women are able to achieve their personal and professional goals, but you do need to understand that we are, depending on each generation, have various upbringing and experiences. It is important to help these women to not only survive psychologically here, but also be helped to understand the life here. (translated from Russian)

It is known that each person assimilates differently within a new environment (Remennick, 2005); therefore, it is hard to generalize what any particular immigrant woman might experience emotionally and psychologically.

Tanya suggested a few specific community services that would be helpful for future immigrants:

> We do not have a strong, in Arizona at least, strong minor community in which they have hospitals, schools, or something like that, have some scholarships for us, something like that to support the immigration.

Another specific service that the women pointed out is the presence of knowledgeable advisers in community colleges who could help immigrants avoid wasting time and money. To have some type of support from the government when making one's first steps in a new country would benefit not only immigrants, but also the local economy, which can utilize the good education and strong business skills of educated female immigrants. The women mentioned that this kind of support, particularly scholarships and similar benefits, exists for immigrants from other countries, but because they speak English and they are of white complexion, people around them assume that their social transition should be easy. Therefore, many of their needs as immigrants are ignored. As Tanya said,

> So like if to be heard and seen and being, you know a minority, but we are minority that is not visible, you know, it is said. Because, you know, Spanish minority is the huge one, but I am a minority; you know, if you Chinese or something, or Japanese or something…

Some of the women noted that it is important to learn how to utilize positive emotions and resources and minimize negative feedbacks and setbacks. All of the participants thought that they cannot just let obstacles around them take over. The women

believed that their victories are inspiring and that they need to focus on their personal happiness and satisfaction.

Chapter Six

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Previous research has demonstrated that classification of immigrants into one category fails to address the cultural and social norms that differentiate ethnic groups from each other (Crenshaw, 1989). My analyses focus on highly educated Eastern European immigrant women in order to contrast the multidimensionality of female immigrants' experiences with prior single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences.

My analyses reveal that highly educated EE women immigrants were theoretically erased from immigration policies and research. Existing research on female immigrants does not take into consideration previously earned higher degrees and social status of EE women. All of the women in my research came from non-English speaking countries and seven of them were married immigrants. Two of the women immigrated to the United States due to their husband's migration, two migrated due to job opportunities, and five married U.S. citizens. All of the women were highly educated and reported a satisfactory social status prior to migration. However, the research found that even though all of them were employed, their employment was not commensurate with their education and prior professional background (seven of eight participants). Barriers to labor force integration that the immigrant women faced included language, accent, non-recognition of foreign credentials, lack of confidence, isolation, and culture shock. These barriers were not specific to a workplace, industry, or ethnic or class-defined category of immigrant women, rather they referred to systemic obstacles.

Each of the participants used different strategies to achieve success in labor force integration. One obtained a university degree in the United States, while others took ESL classes or earned certifications or college degrees. After earning her master's degree, one woman continued attending college, taking classes to help her better compete in the job market. Two of the women did volunteer work, and five were working for minimum wage in menial jobs they found when they first came to the United States. All of the women reported working much harder than they had prior to migration, making enormous efforts and personal sacrifices.

Social acceptance. At the community level, participants reported that the broader society and culture are sending them messages that undermine their personal motivation to search for better personal and professional opportunities. All of the women reported that their integration into social settings, educational institutions, organizations, and the employment market were met with various degrees of stress, misunderstanding, confusion, and lack of support. On the other hand, all of the women noted that their sense of optimism, personal persuasion, and constant inner resolve helps them to move forward in search of social and cultural acceptance. Findings on the women's social integration process support previous research indicating that cultural and personal differences among immigrant groups shape their view of what they perceived as stressful events, their coping mechanisms, and their desire for assistance (Bonnano 2004; Yakushko et al., 2008; Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; Ritsner et al., 2001; Romero & Roberts, 2003; Yakushko, 2009).

Another significant finding was that the majority of participants considered themselves a "minority" in the new society. Most people who constitute a minority

generally describe themselves, among other populations, as ethnic groups that have a different cultural identity on the basis of common history, language, culture, territory, and so on (Pamir, P., 1997). Most ethnic groups look towards recognition of their cultural and social capital and protection of their rights in the host countries. Six of the eight women expressed their perception of unfairness and voiced complains due to the lack of benefits in educational and employment spheres. Five of the eight women reported that there is a discrepancy between the financial assistantship afforded them and that afforded to other groups. The women felt as if they were being denied some of the social, cultural, and financial rights and opportunities available to other ethnic populations. They felt that there is a community failure and inability to meet the needs of Eastern European minorities in terms of valid distribution of financial and social recourses and opportunities. All of the women felt a strong need for changes that will offer equitable social and economic support for the not-so-visible Eastern European immigrants. They believed that such support is currently available only for more visible, recognized minorities.

All of the women agreed that despite their white ethnic appearance they felt not fully accepted in their new surroundings. Being identified and classified as a "white" person did not help the participants to access any benefits, but rather confused their status as an immigrant with the non-immigrant population. All of the women noted that they were lost right after migration and were unpleasantly surprised that there were no helpful outreach programs for the Eastern European immigrant population in their areas. The women felt like they were in a disadvantage due to their European ethnicity in comparison to other immigrant populations who were offered financial and professional

services and outreach programs. Prejudice was also reported by a majority of the women who experienced multiple sources of social oppression. This research reveals that some participants encountered discrimination based on language, gender, race, and employment opportunities. These findings are supported by previous research that discusses immigrants' experiences with xenophobia, racism, sexism, and discrimination (Yakushko 2009; Berger, 2004; Marsella & Ring, 2003; Yakushko, 2007; Yakushko & Chronister, 2005).

A majority of the women also said that their encounters with social or government aid were mostly unhelpful and that it took multiple attempts, which cost them time and money, to figure out how the United States' educational and employment systems work. In fact, their lack of complete understanding and comprehension still hinders their successful social and professional integration into United States' society. All of the participants would welcome social resources that could be made available through social and immigration support networks within and outside of ethnic communities. All of the participating women brought with them a certain level of human capital (received education, work experiences) into the new social and economic structure of the United States society. From a socio-cultural perspective (Rogoff, 1995, 2003), all of the women were willing or unwilling participants of available social and cultural opportunities. Sociocultural theory emphasizes the multiple and often overlapping features of such opportunities and limitations.

All of the participants were born and raised in the centralized political system of the former Soviet Union. Therefore, until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, all of the citizens of the USSR were under the safety net of centralized economic, social, medical,

and political policies. The perception and notion of a secure future was guaranteed by a history of established social welfare. The fall of the Soviet Union, followed by a quick transition to a market economy, brought mass unemployment, declining living standards, and growing disparities in income within newly established independent countries. All of the participants recalled their realization of their governments' inability to provide economic prosperity to the people and their desires to seek a better future. All of the women stated that they imagined life in the United States would include government social and economic support that would provide them with the missed benefits and opportunities of the former USSR. However, all of the women discovered that their perceptions of the United States' social, economic, and political systems were to some degree wrong or misguided as they learned that United States does not have a centralized system of social support. Transitioning to the United States without such support was harsh for the women, as they had no structural safety nets in place (see Table 6). However, for the women who married Jewish men or who identified themselves as Jewish, the safety net was in place in the form of the Jewish enclave community. Therefore, women's personal and interpersonal participation within their new communities was limited to the available social and cultural contexts and the available collaborations and cultural tools (Rogoff, 1998, 2003).

All of the women also commented on their experiences with the beliefs of the existing or non-existing enclave communities that they were a part off, as well as the cultural tools those communities had or had not provided them. Portes and Willson (1980) define an enclave community as a physical space with a large concentration of a particular ethnicity that promotes the social and economic development of its members.

Enclave communities create an inviting and helpful space that gives new immigrants opportunities to seek potentially beneficial knowledge, relations, connections, and employment in order to achieve an easier transition, adjustment, and assimilation into a new host society.

As described by Portes and Zhou (1993), segmented assimilation focuses primarily on identifying the contextual, structural, and cultural factors within the chosen settled community. Segmented assimilation was noted to affect the success of immigrants assimilations due to visible and invisible obstacles that can provide or cut off their economic mobility. Furthermore, Cornfield and Arzubiaga (2004) note that recently, African, Asian, and Latin American immigrants are seeking local communities' accommodations to aid assimilation by "strengthening and adjusting social services and educational institutions" (p.158). Therefore, enclave communities represent for immigrants an important option for segmented assimilation that helps various ethnic groups to overcome immediate obstacles within their new host country (see Table 5).

The importance of enclave communities for easing assimilation can be seen in my findings as well. Three of the eight participants stated that their transition to the United States was easier due to the Jewish Family Reconciliation Program (JFRP) in California. Two of the women were not of Jewish ethnicity but were married into Judaism at time of their migration. Their Jewish enclave communities provided them with financial, personal, social, and professional help, first to their spouses and later to them. These findings support previous research on Jewish immigrants' adaptation (Reminnick, 2007; Sinacore at el., 2009; Birman & Trickett, 2001; Birman at el., 2002). In comparison to

the other five participants' lack of community support, this finding emphasizes the importance of ethnic enclave community support (see Table 5 and Table 6).

The research narratives in this study demonstrate that many of the participants view their immigration with contradictory feelings. Their perceptions detail both their struggles and their hopefulness despite hardships. Specifically, immigrants struggle with their expectations as they continue their adaptation and resettlement journeys. Despite the EEI women's continued difficulty with adapting and re-adjusting their personal, professional, and social life trajectories within a new culture, they all displayed wisdom and resilience, which facilitated their growth and led them to new resources. And regardless of multiple internal and external difficulties, many found ways to move forward, preserve their hopefulness, continue personal and family development, and seek personal and professional satisfaction. In addition, all of the women were willing to help and provide personal advice to other immigrants around them.

Although some scholars note that participation only in ethnic communities can potentially create a barrier to an immigrant's successful adaptation (Bush et al., 2005; Portes, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), the findings in this study mirror previous research on the value of supportive immigration policies, programs, and services within ethnic and native communities' social networks (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Nesteruk, 2007; Portes and Rumbaut, 2006).

Personal struggles. Participants in this study reflected on their personal expectations and experiences in their countries of origin and in the United States both in a positive and a negative light. There was some variation among women's reported personal, social, and professional values and goals due to the level of support from their

immediate and extended family and friends, the encouragement and support from immigrant and non-immigrant acquaintances, and their outlook regarding their new life paths. For example, one significant finding was that participants sometimes created obstacles for themselves when their personal feelings, beliefs, and perceptions limited their will and desire to pursue personal and professional achievements. Unlike in the pre-migration phase, in which participants knew what their options were due to cultural and sociocultural restrictions and limitations, post-migration life was unknown and brought with it more choices without particular rules or restrictions. Continuing education and career re-orientation, changing personal and professional goals, the emotions associated with family support or lack of support, the reality of economic situations, employment and educational restrictions, the need for language skills, and cultural shock were just some of the immediate factors to which these women were exposed.

All of these changes required considerable personal investment of time, patience, money, and continual effort, regardless of failure, which left some women feeling lost, scared, vulnerable, and, in some cases, depressed. All of the women noted that they had maintained an internal dialog (Hermans, 1996, 2001) with their external context as they encountered local cultures and environments. Through "dialogical self' conversations the women tried to navigate various possible foreseen and unforeseen obstacles. These conversations afforded them multiple voices of self-preservation. The majority of women reported that at some point they also experienced rejection and negative feedback, which made them question their self-worth, intellectual knowledge, and professional abilities. As in other studies on life- changing events, these women were trying to sort through various contradictory information, which resulted in negative and harsh thoughts about

themselves and their situations and increased post-migration unhappiness, but at the same time they were eager to explore the available information and adjust their view of self (Bauer et. al., 2005; Baumeister, 1991; Hayes et. al., 2007; Heatherton & Nichols, 1994). These findings are consistent with previous research that indicates that the inability to transfer professional credentials, accompanied by changes in socioeconomic status and loss of professional status, can hinder one's experiences during resettlement (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 2006; Robila 2010).

Professional disorientation. All of the participants in this study acknowledged their commitment to educational achievements prior to their migration. The majority of the women thought that their educational preparation gave them a significant increase in self-respect and social standing. Historically, the educational system in pre- and post-Soviet Union countries promoted educational equality; therefore, women were highly educated and professionally successful (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Nesteruk, 2007; Kishinevsky, 2004; Remennick, 2007). The theme of the importance of education emerged within the findings. After their migration all of the women thought that their degrees and professional experiences would bring them competitiveness in the employment market in the United States. Instead, the reality of different political and economic laws and systems shocked them and forced all of the women to undergo fundamental changes to their career-related expectations. These altered expectations, combined with language barriers, negatively affected the women, particularly emotionally, and proved to be one of the most profound stressors of immigration. This finding is also consistent with previous research discussing the insufficiency of immigrants' pre-migration education and work-related experiences (Kadkhoda, 2002;

Remennick, 2003a; Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Ritsner et al., 2001; Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, and Barker, 1999).

Another key finding was the centrality of professional goals and desired career paths for these women's personal and professional identities. Their long-standing cultural and educational history placed heavy emphasis on women's education and employment (Remennick, 2013; Remennick, 2007; Kiblitskaya, 2000). From a sociocultural standpoint, Russia had historically placed women in positions of power[4]. As a result, the women expected personal and professional responsibilities as a natural aspect of societal membership. Some of the participants were eager not only to have a desired career but also to achieve a leadership position and reclaim their previous status. The differences among participants' internalized career identities and their post-migration jobs resulted in self-doubt. The findings suggest that the difficult conditions of multiple environmental stressors, the lack of a support system, and the difficulty of negotiating personal relationships generated internal conflict and discrepancies within the women's life roles. The women reported that their internal struggles were associated with negative emotions, such as sadness, frustration, feeling unworthy or hopeless, and loss of pride and overall self-esteem. These findings are consistent with studies of other immigrants (DeSilva, 2010; Skachkova, 2000; Remennick, 2007).

Participants' experiences and descriptions of their professional and academic challenges also mirrored those described in prior research (Yakushko, 2006; Remennick, 2007; Yakushko & Cronister, 2005). The majority of the women arrived in the United States with the expectation of maintaining their professional trajectories; however, after a

[4] For example, Queen Ekaterina I ruled Russia from 1724-1727.

few years of facing professional barriers, participants considered alternative careers and obtained new educational credentials. Often, economic security played a major role in their choice of post-migration careers. As mentioned in Cornfield and Arzubiaga (2004),

> … the magnitude of policy responses to integrating tendencies, indicators of immigrant integration in local school systems should be developed and inventories taken of the extent and ethnic patterning of immigrant integration in educational systems and of the supply of existing social support resources for integrating immigrants in local educational systems. (p.178)

An interesting finding from this research shows that only one of eight participants chose to obtain another higher degree through a university; the other women received certifications or associate degrees. Some of the women noted that if they had been advised about all of the educational and employment barriers earlier in their migration, they may have chosen different paths for their professional trajectories. For the women in this study, professional trajectories and professional identities were a source of personal satisfaction and a fulfillment of familial responsibility.

Family matters. Many factors affect one's decision to emigrate, such as political and economic instabilities and social and personal reasons (Arthur, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003; Henry & Kemp, 2002; Meisenheimer, 1992). The female immigrant population is continuing to grow (Marsella & Ring, 2003). Women may be influenced to immigrate to the United States because of personal desires (e.g., getting married abroad, reuniting with family) and because of challenges in their native country (e.g., financial instability, lack of employment) (Gabbaccia, 1994; Robila, 2007; Levchenko & Solheim, 2013). The results of this research study support previous studies that identify that the

majority of Eastern European women immigrants to the United States seek economic security, family unification, and international marriages. However, in this research study, six out of the eight Eastern European female immigrants who migrated to United States through family reunification programs and through international marriage did not have a specific goal to migrate to the United States; instead, they said that it just happened at some point of their life. Three of the eight participants did mention that they were looking into the international marriage market not only for economic reasons, but also because of their inability to find prospective young men in their home countries who could become a good husband and father to their future or existing children. These findings are also consistent with previous studies on Eastern European and United States' marriages, in which foreign-born women were looking to improve their socioeconomic conditions as well as their marriage options, while American men were looking for more "traditional" and "exotic" brides (Champion, 1994; Jackson, 2007; Heyse, 2010; Patico, 2009; Rossiter, 2005).

Findings from this research study are also consistent with previous studies on the importance of immediate and extended family support for immigrant women during modifications of their personal, professional, and social trajectories. The husbands of three of the eight women were supporting them in their academic or career searches. However, two of the eight women reported that their husbands were not only unsupportive, but strongly against their professional development or career advancement. Previous studies noted that spouses' resistance to their wives' career opportunities reflected their concerns about the possibility of their wives becoming less domesticated and more Americanized. This resistance can diminish immigrant women's desires for

personal and professional achievements as well as their hopefulness regarding their family's future (Coser et al., 1999; Crompton, 1999; Haines & Mortland, 2001).

In this study, four of the women came to the United States on fiancée visas. Three of these women knew their husbands for only a short period of time, and most of their communication occurred via email or phone. All were surprised to learn that their future husbands were not completely honest with them in regards to personal or financial matters. All of the women lived in countries that did not have loans and credit cards at that time; to own cars or apartments, they were required to pre-pay with cash. The men took advantage of these different payment expectations and economic structures and presented themselves as financially self-sufficient by sending pictures of their houses and cars without telling the women that they did not own these but rather rented them and were paying off loans. One woman reported that her husband could not afford to pay the fees necessary for her to apply for a green card. Other women said that they stayed in their homes without a car and therefore without the ability to get around. The above findings are similar to previous research that argues that worldwide inequalities and stereotypes of wealthy Western versus developing countries ensure the international spouse's dependence and therefore hinders their well-being (Rossiter, 2005; Patico, 2009; Crandall, et. al., 2005; Vergara, 2000).

Similarly, previous research shows that many immigrant women from Europe who came to the United Sates as "mail-brides" reported being kept financially dependent and controlled by their American husbands who did not give them money and did not allow them to work, or controlled the money they earned and showed some emotional or other type of abuse (Raj & Silverman, 2002; Crandall, Senturia, Sullivan & Shiu-

Thornton, 2005). In this study, one of the women had the strength to leave her husband once the reality of his financial situation was evident and once his emotional promises were broken. She was then left struggling with feeling as though she had lost a sense of who she was as an individual.

Regardless of their marital situation, all of the women were determined to reach their goals as the means for personal self-validation. All of the participants in the study also noted that it was difficult to maintain personal and professional balance due to marital relationships, social expectations, and economic reality.

Another finding from the research relating to personal trajectories was the immigrant women's devotion to their children. Each woman's biggest dream was a successful future for her children. All of the women stated that their children and grandchildren would have more opportunities due to their upbringing in the United States and their lack of accents. All of the women felt that their struggles and successes were worth it for the next generation's success. These findings are also consistent with other literature, in which immigrant parents show optimism about their children's prospects of an advantageous position in their new country (Caplan et al., 199; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Portes & Rumabut, 2001; Nesteruk, 2007). All of the women noted that they are teaching their children to value education and to be driven by educational achievements, hard work, and high aspirations. All of the participants believed that children are influenced by their parents' attitudes, experiences, and values.

Another key finding was the pressure that a majority of participants felt from their immediate and extended family members as well as friends who were left in their country

of origin, to be successful in all aspects of personal and professional lives in the United States of America. The majority of the women reported that they were financially helping their relatives. Only three of five women were employed full-time, whereas the other women were juggling one or two part-time jobs. However, the women felt that it was their responsibility to help even though they acknowledged that they would be in a better condition once they found the perfect employment. Also, the majority of the women noted that even their close relatives do not completely understand the reality and complexity of the financial situation in the United States. However, all of the women believe in their future possibilities and are continuing to work toward them. These findings support previous research findings on the strong family ties of Eastern European families (Nesteruk & Marks, 2009).

Accent. Previous research shows that immigrants' experiences in their host countries vary depending on cultural misconceptions, the new environment's customs and laws, and language barriers (Remennick, 2004; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Solheim, 2000, Bui, 2004; Zahedi, 2005). For all of the participants in this study, their personal, professional, and social adjustments to a foreign environment were challenging because, as Eastern European immigrant women, they all have thick accents. Some of the women had experiences in which an American made negative comments about their English language proficiency and accent. The majority of the participants believed that their inadequate English proficiency, particularly their heavy accents, had hindered their chances of finding desired employment and income, and had cost them professional and social mobility. This is consistent with the findings of existing literature, which reports

that immigrants' overall personal and professional performances were related to their English language abilities (Zahedi, 2005; Espenshade and Fu 1997; DeSilva, 2010).

All of the women also noted that their language proficiency was improving every year and that they were experiencing more awareness of the host culture due to continuous cultural adjustments. Seven of the eight women were maintaining their native languages through communicating with family and friends while also improving their English language skills. All of the women saw fluent bilingualism as an intellectual and cultural advantage rather than a negative consequence of immigration. Scholars today agree that after migration, maintaining one's native language while learning and refining a new language are beneficial assets for immigrants in their family acculturation and adaptation processes (Espenshade and Fu 1997; Portes and Hao 2002; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Robila 2007; Nesteruk, 2007).

Cultural differences. All of the women in this study are still sometimes conflicted regarding the cultural and social aspects of living in the United States. Despite living in the United States for more than five years, the women struggle with reconciling their family, social, professional, and cultural values of collectivism and interdependence with the American value of independence. This is consistent with literature that reports on the tendency of first-generation immigrants to compare contexts and conditions of living in the United States with their countries of origin (Falicov, 2003; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001) and with their attempts to establish a balance between the collectivist culture of Eastern Europe and the individualistic culture of the United States (Patel et al., 1996; Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Nesteruk, 2007).

Another finding from this research reinforces George Herbert Mead's (1934) argument that one's self-concept is formed and regulated by situationally adopting others' perspectives on the self. Because all of the women came from post-USSR countries, their self-understanding corresponded pragmatically to the social and cultural expectations from the countries where they were born and lived prior to migration. This finding also supports Rogoff's (1995, 2003) sociocultural theory that an individual's development always incorporates the cultural values and beliefs of the particular communities in which an individual is currently participating. Because stereotypes about the groups to which one belongs represent commonly shared perspectives on the self, self-evaluation may be influenced by these stereotypes. This is consistent with popular contemporary theories that implicate cognitive accessibility in self-understanding through acceptance of the most vivid identity related to the situation (e.g., Higgins & King, 1981; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). The participants also established new social bonds after migration and maintained these to the degree that they were able to share both individual and social experiences, relationships, and beliefs. All of the women in this study valued their most prominent roles not only as a wife and mother, but also as an equal partner in relationships and as a valuable member of society, all of which are consistent with the collectivist mentality from their countries of origin. Therefore, beliefs were established and maintained to the degree that they were perceived to be shared with others.

To conclude this section, then, the unforeseen realities of changes in the women's personal, professional, and social trajectories were hard to work through, but all of the participants' narratives included tales of personal opportunities and mentions of a bright

future. As they evaluated their lived experiences through their narratives, all of the women showed their strength, determination, and vulnerability through discussion of their achievements as well as their failures. All of them also noted that in the future, they would like to see a stronger, more united Eastern European community that would help new and existing immigrant women and their families to adjust to their new lives and pursue their American dreams.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

This study is a narrative representation of the personal, professional, and social life trajectories and experiences of first-generation immigrant women from Eastern Europe. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the women's individual situations and identity transformations in a new, post-migration sociocultural context. To do so, I interviewed immigrant women from Eastern Europe, now living in Arizona and California, who aspired to achieve or who had achieved personal, professional, and social success in the United States. This study focused specifically on EEI women who came to the United States not only with a rich cultural heritage but also with degrees in higher education and with successful prior work experiences. This study examined participants' experiences with and their expression of feelings regarding the need to re-establish their personal, professional, and social trajectories as often-invisible immigrants. Although each woman's story was different, several commonalities were present in their narratives: all of the women highlighted the importance of the family unit and their professional careers, as well as their struggles with the existence of their accents. As discussed previously, these women experienced personal, professional, and social identity transformations. Overall, most of the women looked to establish long-standing roots in their host country, although individual variations in their immediate goals and desires regarding career and family persist. The following themes and sub-themes demonstrated the most momentous aspects of the Eastern European immigrant women's experiences: personal identity, social acceptance, professional career, language barriers, family matters, and employment realities.

Contributions of the Study

The findings from this research make several important contributions to the literature on immigrants. First, they highlight a less-visible population of white immigrants from Eastern Europe, whereas the majority of recent studies focus on visibly ethnic immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and South America. Second, this study examines the experiences of highly educated immigrant women who earned their degrees prior to migration, while previous studies focus on immigrants and refugees with less formal education. Third, this study focuses on individuals and examines women's narratives. Fourth, it uses qualitative methodology that allows participants' voices to be heard. A qualitative methodology was the best choice for this research because it allowed participants to elaborate on their pre- and post-migration life experiences through open-ended questions. This methodology was instrumental in studying immigrant women in the context of their new social environment and in portraying with richness the women's perspectives on their personal, professional, and social life changes. Fifth, this study explores women's struggles to re-establish their personal, professional, and social trajectories in the United States.

Limitations of the Study

This study's limitations stem from its small sample size: the study analyzes data from only four participants in each of the states of California and Arizona. In addition, only women ages 27 to 69 participated. It is also possible that the requirements for participation may have limited the pool of candidates and overall representation of EEI women. Therefore, the participants' themes and experiences may or may not be

representative of the entire population of EEI women. Another limitation of the study is simply that American literature about EEI women is lacking.

One limitation of this qualitative method is that it represented a small sample, which does not allow for generalizations or transfer of findings to a larger representative sample of immigrant women from Eastern European countries who currently reside in the United States. Even so, Eastern European immigrants share some common cultural values, and there are still variations among this group of immigrants due to different languages, socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, cultures, factors surrounding immigration, personal and social values, and beliefs. However, all of the participants of this study were highly educated women who earned their university degrees prior to migration, and thus, their experiences may not reflect the reality of other immigrant women who came here without attaining an education. In addition, the findings of this study may not have universal applicability to women who migrated to the United States as children, or to women with different availability of resources (e.g., ethnic communities, social supports, work conditions, husband or family financial security). However, the findings presented in this research can help further understanding of the challenges and needs of immigrant women.

Benefits of this Research

The existing literature on the personal experiences of immigrants, particularly of female immigrants, is limited. My study addresses this gap with an in-depth focus on the transitional processes of EEI women in the United States, specifically regarding their academic and career expectations once they arrive. My contribution of qualitative research data to the existing general knowledge base on immigration issues can provide

the platform for a more extensive analysis of the unique experiences of female immigrants. By isolating the variables of family expectations and educational expectations for female immigrants, opportunities for identifying specific social support services in enclave ethnic communities and other essential resources and educational services can be identified. In addition, identifying the particular struggles of self-identification, as well as the cultural and family impact on choices women immigrants must make regarding their roles in the family, their education, and their career, can assist other women in understanding their own transitional process. Once understood, new information can help female immigrants to mitigate or challenge familial expectations. This new research may also help female immigrants to make clear and defined decisions regarding their own self-identity and beliefs. Becoming knowledgeable about the cultures and histories of both immigrants and their host society can minimize problems associated with immigration and can influence patterns of adaption. It is important to share the message that when society in general has a broader point-of-view and deeper cultural understandings, non-immigrant and immigrant populations alike can better understand and relate to others.

Implications of Findings for Future Research

Because of the small sampling of immigrant women, this study does not claim to represent the definitive perspective on highly-educated EEI women. These eight women illustrate some characteristics of the EEI women who are trying to define and analyze their identity construction within their life trajectories. The findings of this research provide some insight into the lives and feelings of highly educated EEI women before and after immigration and suggest potential directions for future research. The

understudied population of Eastern Europe should be the subjects of further studies, with attention paid to a bigger sample of EEI women from all 50 states in the United States to identify commonalities and differences in their personal, professional, and social transitions. Later, this study can be repeated with other highly educated populations of immigrant women from various cultures and compared to data from the EEI women. If similar professional struggles were identified by women from various cultures, then it would be possible to gather specific suggestions for creating a better infrastructure of educational and professional reevaluation programs and employment placement opportunities. It is important for all immigrant women to utilize their professional and educational backgrounds to feel like and become equal citizens in the United States. This would financially benefit the United States as well.

In addition, immigrant unemployment has been and continues to be a national concern, and although some programs and services related to immigrant employment exist, not many people find them useful. Understanding the difference between uneducated and highly educated immigrants, their experiences, and their differing occupational and employment needs are all necessary for providing appropriate, timely, efficient, and culturally sensitive employment services. Moreover, the help of culturally aware departments and people would create a relaxed and knowledgeable atmosphere for immigrants to learn about obstacles to their career progression and ways to overcome these barriers. There was no previous research on comparison between Jewish enclave community support and other groups of immigrants. I would like to do additional research into the practices in Jewish communities to understand the structure of community support that provides such a strong support for immigrants. Understanding the support offered within this ethnic community may begin to address the current need

for development of a model of community support that is widely advertised and accessible. It is important to help all immigrants with successful re-employment; in the end, this is beneficial to both immigrants and to the United States' economic security. The results of this study can help to start changing service provisions in employment training and to begin assistance programs for immigrant women from Eastern Europe. As the research findings show, employment plays a significant role in EEI women's identity and helps to fulfill their professional, social, psychological, and emotional well-being.

I conducted these interviews as an immigrant woman myself, and I have reinforced my own belief that structured support systems should be designed to provide help for educated immigrant women. Each of the women in this study told her story from her own perspective, and each had a unique message. It is my hope that these stories will enlighten future research and that information from this research may help new immigrant women to find assistance.

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Table 1

Levels of Analysis for Results

Level of Analysis	Definition
1. Domain	Main categories based on research questions (e. g., Professional identity in the U. S.)
2. Category & Subcategory	Emerging specific concepts within a domain (e. g., Difficulty establishing career)
3. Theme	More refined topics that surfaced within categories (e. g., Regret)

Table 2
Emergent Themes

Research Question	Domains	Categories & Sub-categories	Emergent Themes
Question 1: What have been the life experiences of EEI women before their migration to the United States?	Past: Provide a few sentences to describe your personal, professional and social life trajectory prior to the migration.	1. Family support in early and post-graduate education 2. Impact of cultural environment 3. Who you were in the social contexts of family, community, and society	Family support, no family support, hopes, dreams, frustrations, wishes, desires,
Question 2: What have been the primary challenges and motivations experienced by EEI women within their personal, professional, and social lives since their immigration to the United States?	Present: Please describe your greatest challenges and motivations while establishing your personal, professional, and social life trajectory post-migration.	4. Family support 5. Value of previously earned education 6. Value of work experience prior to immigration 7. Community, government support after immigration 8. Reality of current situation	reality, abilities, opportunities, expectations, time frame, settling down, compromising, depression, worthlessness, regret
How would EEI women describe the next chapter of their personal, professional, and social lives?	Future: What are your dreams, hopes, and plans for your personal, professional, and social life trajectory in the future? Do you have a vision of tomorrow?	8. Education 9. Relocation 10. Career & family	Hopes, dreams, wishes, abilities, opportunities

Table 3

Participant Demographic Data

Pseudonym	Age	Marital status/Number of children, grandchildren	Year of Migration/Class/ Status/Ethnicity	Country of origin	Resettlement State
Natasha	31yrs	Married/1 child	2006/Fiancé/Permanent Resident/Ukrainian	Kiev, Ukraine	Arizona
Olga	53yrs	2 Marriage/ 1 child, 2 grandchildren	2003/Refugee/Citizen/Ukrainian	Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine	California
Svetlana	69yrs	2 Marriage/1 child, 1 grandchild	1999/Family Reunion/Citizen/ Ukrainian	Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine	California
Masha	37yrs	Divorced/ 1 child	1999/Family Reunion/Citizen/ Russian	Saint-Petersburg, Russia	California
Maria	57yrs	Married/2 children, 5 grandchildren	1998/Sponsored/ Citizen/Jewish	Tashkent, Uzbekistan	Boston-California
Alena	28yrs	Married/no children	2009/Fiancé/Permanent Resident/ Ukrainian	Nikolayev, Ukraine	Arizona
Tanya	33yrs	Divorced/1 child	2006/Fiancé/ Permanent Resident/ Ukrainian	Kiev, Ukraine	Arizona
Dasha	42yrs	Married/2 children	2000/Fiancé/Citizen/ Russian	Yekaterinburg, Russia	Arizona

Table 4

Participant Employment History

Pseudonym	Age	Education before migration	Education after migration	Pre-migration occupation & years	Current occupation & years
Natasha	31yrs	Master's in Journalism	ESL, classes in journalism, editing	Journalist at the university station, 1.5 yrs.	2 part-time jobs: accounting at Ross and MCC TV show creator/producer, 5 yrs, without benefits
Olga	53yrs	Master's in Engineering	ESL, Master's in Education	Management at the local government, 12 yrs	Full-time small business office manager, with benefits, 5 yrs
Svetlana	69yrs	Medical Doctor	Classes in ESL	Worked as a psychiatrist at the government clinic and had a private practice,30yrs	Full-time nanny, without benefits, 14 yrs
Masha	37yrs	Master's in Business Administration	ESL, Computer classes	none	Full-time software tester, with benefits, 10 yrs

"Continues"

Table 4

Participant Employment History

Pseudonym	Age	Education before migration	Education after migration	Pre-migration occupation & years	Current occupation & years
Maria	57yrs	Master's in Mathematics	ESL, Professional Development classes	Teacher and computer designer, 22 yrs	Teacher, retired, 12 yrs
Alena	28yrs	Master's in Financing	Classes in ESL	Accounting at the local bank, 0.5yrs	Part-time front and back supervisor at Ross, without benefits, 3 yrs
Tanya	33yrs	Master's in Ukrainian language and lit., foreign literature	ESL, AA in Dental Hygiene	none	Full-time hygienist, without benefits, 1yr
Dasha	42yrs	Bachelor's in Architecture	ESL, AA in Dental Hygiene; dental assistant certificate	Miscellaneous jobs (interpreter, tourist agent)	Full-time hygienist, without benefits, 5yrs

Table 5

Support from Jewish enclave community

Available Resources:	Women Reported:
Strong support from Jewish community	Low level of stress
Immediately help with education (ESL classes, technical and computer classes)	Quick social adjustment
Guidance toward understanding of available social and government services	Fast track to employment
Guidance toward search and navigation of job market	Easy adaptation into American society

Table 6

FINDINGS: Absence of Eastern European enclave Commuity

Available Resources:	Women Reported:
No support from community	High level of stress, depression, frustration, no satisfaction with present situation
No help with education, straggling to navigate in US educational system	Feeling of being lost Difficult social adjustment
Absence of guidance toward understanding of available social and government services	Straggle with employment
Absence of guidance toward search for a job	Difficult time with adaptation into American society

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVED FORM

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Angela Arzubiaga FARMER
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB
Date:	08/07/2012
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	08/07/2012
IRB Protocol #:	1207008032
Study Title:	Eastern European Immigrant Women's Life Trajectories and Individual Psychological Determina

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

Life trajectories and the individual-psychological determination in EE immigrant women

Date_____

Dear _____
I am a PhD student in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to understand on how EE highly educated women emerge and redefine themselves within new culture, context, and socialization in personal and professional life trajectories.

The regularly scheduled meeting will take 1 and ½ hours and the follow up meeting will take 1 hour. I am inviting your participation, which will involve participation in the scheduled meeting and maybe returning to respond to some questions afterwards during another scheduled meeting. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time. In this study inquiry, the focus is exclusively aimed at understanding the personal journey of EE highly educated immigrant women in the U.S.. The narrative will address the following topics: 1) personal/social learning, developmental and professional experiences prior to the migration; 2) reasons behind the migration and the first steps into adaptation into American life; 3) the decision to use prior academic diploma or to avoid it; 4) further schooling or work; 5) reflection on personal life trajectories.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may only be included if you are between 27 and 69 years old. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty for anybody.

Although there is no direct benefit for you, your participation can inform an ongoing effort to understand EE immigrant women experiences in the U.S.. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be anonymous. I will not document –write down or record- your name on any paper or audiotape form. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but we will not use any identifying information other than a reference to the region or city where the information was gathered.

I would like to audiotape this meeting. The meeting will not be recorded without your permission. If you give permission for this meeting to be taped, you have the right to ask for the recording to be stopped. Please indicate whether you give permission for the meeting to be audiotaped. As soon as the meeting is recorded it will be transcribed and the audiotapes will be kept in locked file cabinets with no traceable information to any individual. The audiotapes will be destroyed (by cutting) within 6 months of taping or as soon as the transcription has been completed, whichever comes first.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me, Kateryna A. Ellis, at: (480) 201-5437. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Research Compliance Office, at (480) 965-6788.

Sincerely,

Kateryna A. Ellis

By signing below you are agreeing to participate to in the study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT LETTERS

July 25, 2012

Facebook/Russian Arizona/ Russian Yellow Pages - Baraban.Com

"Kateryna A. Ellis, a Ph.D. candidate in ASU's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, wants to interview for her dissertation "Life trajectories and the individual-psychological determination in EE immigrant women" immigrant women from Eastern Europe who are currently living in the Arizona or California states, and have been in the U.S. for more than five years. Call (480) 201-5437 or e-mail katerynaellis@yahoo.com"

Dear Mrs./Ms.

I am a PhD candidate at the Arizona State University Educational Psychology Department writing my dissertation on the experiences of highly educated immigrant women from Eastern Europe now living in the U.S. Therefore, this study wants to understand how EE highly educated women emerge and redefine themselves within new culture, context, and socialization in personal and professional life trajectories. Specifically, this study will examine the life trajectories and personal determinations of highly educated EE immigrant women in their host country; and how culture, language, community, formal and informal socialization influence those women everyday lives; and what can be learned from their experiences. I am looking for women who would be willing to participate in the study, which would include a total of six hours interviews (1 and ½ hour sessions, four meetings with each participant) at the participants' convenience.

Criteria for participation include:

- Immigrants from Eastern Europe
- You have to be U.S. citizens
- Minimum of 5 years of residency in the U.S.
- Obtained Bachelor's degree or higher prior to immigration to the U.S.
- Married or not married, with or without children
- Working, in school, or currently unemployed

You participation is voluntary. All names and other identifying information about the participants will be kept confidential. If you or anyone you know would like to participate, please contact me either at (480) 201-5437 or katerynaellis@yahoo.com. The study is currently under way, so please call or write now!

In advance, thanks for your help. I look forward to talking to you!

Sincerely,

Kateryna A. Ellis
PhD candidate
Educational Psychology
MaryLouFulton Teachers College
Grad Teaching Assistant
(480) 201-5437
Kateryna.Ellis@asu.edu

APPENDIX D

INITIAL SCREENING QUESTIONS

Dear Participants,

All of your answers are confidential and you do NOT need to use your real names in any of the following interviews.

Screening Questions:

1) Would you be comfortable in discussing your personal (family) ups and downs prior and post immigration?

2) Would you be comfortable in discussing your professional (work/school) ups and downs prior and post immigration?

3) Do you have some valuable experience that you believe is helpful to know that you can share with other immigrant women?

4) Have you had a bad experience that you want to share in order to help other immigrant women from having similar dangers or obstacles?

APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Dear Participants,

All of your answers are confidential and you do NOT need to use your real names in any

of the following interviews.

Individual interview questions:

1) If you could turn back time, would you be willing to come to the U.S. again or would you prefer to stay in your country and avoid immigration?

2) What has helped you in doing well after migration to the U.S.?

3) Are there things that have made it more difficult for you to do well or prevent you from doing well?

4) Are there other things that would help you to continue doing well or help you overcome obstacles you have today?

5) What are the main factors that influence your ability to use your previously earned higher degree in the new country?

6) What were-your academic or career identities prior to your immigration to the U.S.?

7) How did your academic and career identities evolve as a result of your continuing education and employment experiences?

8) What do you think about the evolution of your cultural identity within the newly defined career, academic and personal identities?

9) When and why did you come to the U.S.?

10) What professional skills and education did you possess before you immigrated to the U.S.?

11) How many organizations have you worked for in the U.S.? What is your present occupation? How long have you been employed in your organization? What position do you hold? What did it take you attain that position?

12) How did you find your feet into the U.S. employment as an immigrant woman?

13) What are your leadership experiences in the U.S workplace?

14) How does your family life factor into your employment and leadership experiences?

15) In your opinion, what challenges are there for immigrant women in attaining leadership positions?

16) What opportunities do you think are open to you to attain leadership positions?

17) How do you compare your employment and leadership experiences in the U.S. with those in your country of origin (if applicable) before you immigrated to U.S.?

18) What advice do you have for new immigrant women about the U.S. workplace?

19) How do you think your family changed as a result of immigration to the U.S.? (Follow-up: What would you say your family lost and gained as a result of the immigration?)

20) What are your goals for your child/ren? Do you think your goals for your children would differ if you had stayed in your native country? If so, how?

21) What are the benefits of having your children grow up in this country?

22) Are there any traditions from your native culture that you find beneficial for your parenting? How do they help?

23) Do you think that you or your family had to give up any of your cultural beliefs/traditions/values to adapt to the American society? If so, what are they?

24) Have you ever thought of going back to your native country?

25) Is there is anything else that you would like to add or take back? Is there anything I didn't ask you about but you think is important to the understanding of what is like to be an EE immigrant woman?

26) Is it differences in job market or differences in requirements for specific job women see as their main obstacles?

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Participant's profiles will be provided below as summary case studies in order to reduce the length of the chapter 5 on results.

Dasha is a 42-year-old woman who immigrated to New York with her 2-year-old daughter in 2000. She arrived as a fiancée, sponsored by her future American husband. She had been married previously in 1996 to a Bulgarian citizen, but had a daughter from a Russian boyfriend. In 2001 she officially divorced her Bulgarian husband. After arriving in the United States, she got married and had a second child, a boy, in 2002. Her husband is currently not working and she is the sole provider for the family. Dasha had graduated with a degree in architecture from the University of Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 1994 but was not able to find a job due to the unstable economic situation. Upon arriving in Bulgaria, she got a part-time job as a tourist's representative. Later, she had a job in a trade firm as a translator for Bulgarian, Russian, and English. Upon arriving in the United States, she stayed at home with her children for three years. Then she went to a community college and got a certificate in physical education that gave her the ability to work part-time as a fitness instructor in a fitness club. Unable to find full-time work, both husband and wife, made the decision to relocate to Phoenix. After relocation she went to community college and obtained a certificate as a dental assistant. Currently she is working two part-time jobs as a dental hygienist.

Maria is a 57- year-old woman who immigrated to Boston in 1998 after being sponsored by her husband. She arrived in the United States to live with her husband who was working for an American company for three years prior to her immigration. She has been married for 37 years and has two daughters who are 33 and 37 years old. Her husband works as a leading project manager for a high tech company. In Tashkent,

Uzbekistan, Maria had completed a master's degree in mathematics. The family migrated to Israel in 1988. She worked as a teacher in an Israel. After migrating to the United States, she took professional development classes to obtain certificates required by the Boston Public School District to obtain a teacher job in public schools. It took her three years to complete the requirements to obtain the necessary certificates. She then worked as a teacher in a Boston public school for twelve years until she retired a year ago.

Natasha is a 31-year-old woman who immigrated to Phoenix in 2006. She arrived as a fiancée, sponsored by her future American husband. She got married upon arrival to the United States and has a six-month-old baby girl. Her husband works full time at Phoenix University. In the Ukraine, Natasha completed a master's degree in journalism from Kiev University and worked part time as a journalist at that university for six years. After migrating to the United States, she took ESL classes for a year and proceeded with classes in journalism at the community college. She has since worked two part-time jobs: one in accounting in a retail store, another as a journalist, developer, and producer of the show *180 Degrees* at Maricopa Community College in the Journalism Department. Currently, she is taking maternity leave to take care of her baby, but is still keeping a part-time job at a retail store, working three hours per day during the week.

Svetlana is a 69-year-old woman who immigrated to San Jose with her husband in 1999. They arrived in the United States after being sponsored by a Jewish community through a family reunion program. She got married in 1967 and has a 40-year-old daughter. She got divorced in 1968 but lived with her ex-husband until she remarried in 1997. Her husband worked as an engineer in the Ukraine and as an assembler in the United States for a private company until his retirement in 2011. In Dnepropetrovsk,

Ukraine, Svetlana obtained her Medical Doctor degree and worked as a psychotherapist for thirty years in government hospitals and in a private clinic. She retired in the Ukraine in 1998, a few months before she migrated to the United States. After arriving in San Jose, she went to a community college and took ESL classes. She started her job as a nanny in 2000, working for one family for two years. In 2002, she found two nanny jobs that paid more money and started working two part-time jobs for two families. She has worked at her current jobs as a nanny for the past 11 years.

Tanya is a 37-year-old woman who immigrated to San Jose with her husband in 1999. They arrived in the United States, sponsored by a Jewish community through a family reunion program. She got divorced in 2001. In 2004, she remarried and had a daughter, who is now 9 years old. She divorced a second time in 2008 and is currently a single mom. In Russia she graduated from Saint Petersburg University with a master's in business administration. She never was employed in the Russia. After arriving in the United States, she took ESL and computer classes at a community college. She started her first job at a high tech company in 2002. Currently, she is working full time as an engineer in a software testing department in high-tech company.

Olga is a 53-year-old woman who immigrated to San Francisco as a refugee in 2003. She arrived in the United States without any money or support. She got married in 1981 and has a 32-year-old daughter. She got divorced in 2001 and remarried in 2010. Her American husband is a small business owner. In the Ukraine she graduated from a chemistry and technology university as a mechanical engineer. She worked for 20 years in business and government settings as an engineer, a CEO of a private company, and a head of a county department. After arriving in the United States, she took ESL classes

and business classes from a community college. In 2006, she enrolled in a master's program and graduated from Arizona State University with a master's in education. She worked in Arizona in a CPA office as an accountant for two years, a research assistant for two years, and a case manager at Arizona State for two years. After she relocated to San Jose, California, in 2009, she got married and is currently working as an office manager for a small business.

Masha is a 33-year-old woman who immigrated to Phoenix with a fiancée visa in 2004. Her future American husband sponsored her immigration. She has an 11-year-old daughter from a previous marriage that ended in 2003. She remarried in 2004 after moving to the United States. She got divorced from her second husband in 2011. She graduated from a pedagogical university in Kiev, Ukraine, with a master's in philology education in 2002 and holds a teaching certificate for Ukrainian language and literature, and foreign literature. In Phoenix, Arizona, she completed an associate's degree in science from a community college and got a degree from a hygiene school in Mesa, from which she graduated in 2012. She is now working part time as a hygienist at several dentist offices and has been waiting for a permanent position for a year.

Alena is a 28-year-old woman who immigrated to Phoenix in 2009 with a fiancée visa. She was sponsored by her future American husband. She had graduated with a master's in finance from Nikolayev University, Ukraine, in 2009. She worked in a Ukrainian bank as an accountant for one year. She married after coming to the United States in 2009. Her husband works as an electrician at a private company. She took ESL classes from a community college and is currently working part time at a retail store, where she has been promoted to the position of a front and back office manager.

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT EXCERPTS

Participant's profile excerpts transcribed from collected data.

Dasha

I was born in Yekaterinburg, and then family moved to Orenburg, the city nearby Kazakhstan border. After graduation from the school, I went back to the college in Yekaterinburg. I studied architecture, and I got bachelor degree in architecture, but I didn't use it at all. At that time in the yearly 90th, it was destruction of old government system and no potential for a young people in Russia. I wanted to get out of there and I moved to Bulgaria. I moved there illegally and was working for a while as a tourist representative. Later I had another job in the trade firm as a translator: Bulgarian-Russian- English. I pick up languages fast so I was able to get a job there. When I moved to Bulgaria, it took me four month to get pretty fluent in Bulgarian language and I knew a little bit of English language so it helped me a lot. I married Bulgarian man for documents, but in reality I had a Russian boyfriend and I get baby girl from him.

I experience the collapse of the Soviet Union. It happened when I just finished the college. Economy was in a very bad condition, no jobs, so I moved to Bulgaria. Soon after I moved to Bulgaria, its economy collapse, also. After I moved to the U.S., 9/11 happened and economy here had collapsed. I am trying to build my future from the beginning again and again.

I migrated to the U.S. 13 years ago and when I was 29 years old. I always wanted to come to the United States. It was my dream many years since I was a young girl. When I was 18, I was looking into finding an American husband, but it did not work at this time. I met a couple of American men at dating agency; they did not choose me as a bride. I was very disappointed at this time. In Bulgaria I started looking again for an

opportunity to marry American men. I met my husband through bridal agency and we only exchanged couple letters with him. Next he came to Bulgaria and in first day of our meeting, he asked, “Marry me?” I answer, “Yes” without any hesitation.

I could not picture my future in the United States at all. It was just blank; I completely did not care at that time what will happen. I knew it could not be worse then what I had at this moment. I decided that whatever must happen, will happen. Marrying a poor men and have an opportunity to move to the United States was so much better than being a single mom with no income, no ability to support myself, pay the rent and food. Reality was that in Bulgaria, you cannot make any career whatsoever. In Russia if you just a girl with no skills or connections, nobody looks seriously at you.

My husband is from New York. He was absolutely poor, had nothing but debt to his name and he barely had worked through his life. He is 19 years older than me, and when I moved to the United States, he was unemployed for a while. I moved here with my two years old daughter. I had another child shortly after coming here, so it took me few years of just raising my kids. Later I started applying to school to get some degree. My husband and I were looking for a job, but could not find any.

I realize that I cannot use my degree from the Russia at all. Russian university system did not prepare us well for the jobs. We studied history and arts, no real application for current requirement. I felt totally unprepared for a job when I finished the college, and I had no idea how to start any career. I finished college when I was 21, and I did not do anything with my education. So, when 10 years later I came to the United States, I could not do anything with my degree. Nobody would take me seriously as an architect. And degree I have would not mean anything anyway. I did not know computers

at all. However, everything here was already on the computer with the auto-CADs, but I am not good with the computers. I was embarrassed to apply for anything related to my degree, so I thought I would just do something else. I looked into the physical education at that time and that is how I became a fitness instructor. It was easy for me. I get certification when we were living in New York City and I started working part time as an instructor in the fitness club. At that moment I thought I wanted to be a physical therapist.

We lived in New York for three years and we had a problem with finding full-time jobs. We decided to move to Arizona. In Arizona, I was trying to find a school to get a degree in a physical therapy, but instead, somehow, I got in the dental field. I went to college to look for enrollment and I spoke to counselor. She said that they do not have a physical therapist assistant certification, but they do have the dental classes which will be starting within next month. She signed me up for dental assistant certificate, and that is how I started up my career in the dental field. I hated it at first, but I got through the school and I started working as a dentist assistant. I like it after some time. I got my first job at the doctor office, and he trained me, so I got a good start for me. But then he sold his practice to the really creepy guy who I did not like and I started looking for another job. So I went to the Maricopa Community College for my hygiene degree. I addicted to be a student, but I cannot go for a real degree. It is just not good for my family. Being around books, taking too much of my time from my children and husband. I like books, but I had to work. I need an income because my husband did not work for the last three years.

Seven years ago in 2006, I started my school as a hygienist. My husband, Tom, strongly supported me during that time and he was always happy for me to do things I

like to do. He has a good side of him; if I will think about past time, I would to marry him again. I believe we are good match somehow; we have sometimes problems with each other but who does not? He is just my rock. He is so stable psychologically, and I am not. I got problems during my childhood, psychological issues like low self-esteem, instability, but he is keeping me together, pushing me through the school, keeping our family together.

Now I am a hygienist, and it took me approximately five years to go through the program. Today I can say that I got from dirt poor to middle class family, and I did it all by myself. Moreover, I took my family with me to the next level of life, which I would not be able to reach in Russia. My parents live in Russia thousand miles away from here and I did not have any contacts with them since I graduated from the high school. I was 16 years old when I left my home and I never really kept contact with them. They were not ever interested in me and did not want to see my kids or my husband at all. So all my family I have are my husband and children. My son is now 11 years old, and daughter is now going to be 15th. She doesn't know her real dad at all. Tom raised her. He is a good dad. He is from the good loving family, stable and peaceful. He has older kids from first marriage. One of them got married. He is 33 years old and the other is 30^{t} years old and he lives in California. We have good relationship and even his ex-wife coming to visit us from time to time. We know all his family, we spending time together, and we are the friends, very good friends. You have to learn to be satisfied with what you have and if you want something more it is fine. First thing you need learn how to be satisfied or otherwise you never will be happy.

I did not have a cultural identity. I grow up in a place with a zero culture, zero revision, zero directions, and zero family orientation. So, I created my own culture where my husband contributes to the family and I am just learning from him because I never had real family. Husband and kids are motivating me to do new things. I want my kids to have better life and I want them to be motivated to go to school, have good jobs in the future. That was my main goal for my children to grow up here and have a better start. When I was 30, I did not know much, came here and started life from zero. They are going to be already so much better that me and I already have big plans for them.

I don't like the heat here in Arizona, but my kids are in school and I would like them to finish a school. And I think there are more of opportunities here. Since we moved here, we have moved up so much. I mean in the New York we were just "white trash", and here we worked so hard and we got a house. It is just mobile home, but still we got everything what we need, and we have so much here and kids are doing great. And everything is going ok, so I don't think I want to move anywhere right now and start from zero. I would like to find full time position for me as a hygienist so I will make more money.

Maria

My husband worked for the American company in Israel. The company moved him to the America temporarily to work on the project. He moved to the United States and I didn't want to move here. So for the first three years, he had a long business trip. He was coming back home every three months and we flew here every six months to visit him. But finally I agree to move to the United States. In Israel I was working as a teacher for six years. My youngest daughter Kira finished middle this time and should go to the

high school. So we signed relocation agreement for the three years with the ability to return back after one year, but then we just stayed in the United States permanently.

I moved to the United States when I was 45 years old. I got my master degree in USSR and then moved to Israel, where I worked as a teacher. I worked in high school and in middle school and I taught mathematics. I had a master's in mathematics and teaching. After I came to the U.S., I translated my diploma according to American standards. I brought it to the Boston school district, but they counted only my bachelor's degree. I learned that I needed to get a Massachusetts licenses so I can be a teacher at the school. To get those licenses, I had to pass a subject tests in mathematics and an English language. It was a reading and writing English tests, and it took long time for me to take it because I came here without knowing any English language.

I learn the English language by watching TV and listening radio first, next, talking to someone, then reading, and only then writing. So first I listen, then I understand, then I read and only then I write. So I understand language like a child but because I am older and I need some kind of writing rules so I am not learning it by rules but by understanding. This is a way to learn it by hearing and it is right for me. It is easier right it or wrong. I started learning English first, and I was taking test by test to receive licenses I need to start working at the school. It took me two years to pass a test in mathematics, and writing and reading English took three and half years. So, from the moment I came here, it took me approximately three and half years to get a teaching license. I did the first translation of my paper by myself and state confirmed that I have a master's degree, but the Boston public school didn't accept it as a master, just bachelor degree. So, I started to work in two schools: one was public Jewish school and another

one private. One man we knew in Boston helped me to write my resume so it would qualify here for the teacher position. Writing a resume correctly is very important so you have a better chance to be called for interviews.

When I came here, everybody was telling that I have such a great education and I am very smart. So, why do I need to teach here? They told that schools do not pay much, they have a lot of tests through the school year, and the children's behavior is not the best. But I was teaching computer science in former Soviet Union. It was the newest courses when I started to teach them. I also taught them in Israel as well. But I reply to everyone just saying that I can make as much money as I need by doing what I know, just being a teacher. I am a very good teacher and I do it great.

My husband didn't support me at this time. He was actually telling me to look for different type of the job; he could not understand my feelings. He was trying to find for me the better opportunities.

After I received the teacher certificate, I worked for 9 years in one school. Then the school had a staff reduction and I left from that school. I was transferred to neighbor school across the street, where I worked for the two and half years. Overall, that was what I wanted. I wanted to work for ten years until I will meet the minimum requirement in the school system. Then I looked around to see if I would like to work several years longer to get a better retirement benefits. It has a big gap in what I get now in my retirement and what I could get working more years, but at that time I was getting sick and so I just left.

I had few friends who were asking me for advices regarding the job opportunities. One of them is my friend who I met several years ago and she wasn't sure if she needed

to teach again. She was teaching back in Moscow and she wasn't sure about situation here because there are a lot of competitions in Boston. I told her about tests, certificates, and all challenges I have had. I advise her to do what she knows the best. I am giving the same advice to everyone. If you know your field, than continue do it, but if you do not have education and experience, you should go for the one.

I am 57 years old now and I am retired. I don't have a clear plan for the future. If all of my kids will be living here, I will stay here. For me, it will be much more pleasant to live in Israel, but it is easier to make money here. So if kids are going to be living here, then my husband and I will be living here as well. I just do not know what is going to be in the future for us.

Natasha

When I come to America for the very first time, my biggest motivation was to study language and to see my sister who moved here. So I came with the student exchange program work and travel to USA. I came to the Orange County just to work in customer service and learn language this way. For me, the most important was the experience and the language, of course. I study at the University in Kiev at this time and my major was journalism. When I came to Orange County, I met Chris, who is my husband, but I didn't married him then. And after that I came to the United States two more times. The following year I was doing internship program, but all this time me and Chris were dating. He came to Ukraine twice and I came back to America twice. So we been together for three years before we got married, and so we traveling back and forth. We got married here, in the U.S. on our third year anniversary of our first date. I came to the United States in August 2006 on a permanent base and live in Phoenix, AZ, since

then. It took only four months for me to get a green card after we got married. I don't have a citizenship yet, although I could have it long time ago, but I just don't see it is as a necessity yet.

I had a lot of support back in Ukraine from my family and teachers. My teacher from the journalism department was my biggest support from the school. She saw all of this talent in me, but when I was arguing with my future husband and saying that we will stay in Ukraine, she was telling that I should go to the United States She told the women career may seems to me very important at the moment, but still for women, the first is her private life and Chris is the great husband, so I cannot be stupid. I didn't understand her at that time but I do agree with her now, truly. All my friends loved Chris, my mom loved him also, and she was telling I should go to America.

Once I moved to the United States, Chris was helping me with everything he could. I didn't drive at that time. I felt insecure about many things. When I first got here and I didn't have any Russian friends and I was very, very, depressed. I became a happier person once I found Russian friends here. I know some immigrants don't need it, but for me it is necessary to communicate with Russian friends. You can see around my house decoration with matreshka dolls. I want to keep it for myself and my kids. When I first moved here, I was horribly, horribly home sick. I always compare people to plants, and there are some plants that you can put in any soil and they will be fine and then some plants, if you put them in different ground, they will go down and die. So I was one of those plants that have a hard time to move into different soil. Maybe it is because I have a more conservative mind. I still have friends since I was 7 or 8 years old and we still be friends. Three of my girlfriends came and visited us here. They stayed with us here for a

months. So, since I found out here is Russian community, we have parties and spend time together, watching TV shows, going to the places. I am an advocate between two cultures today.

Chris helped me to sign for ESL classes and teacher at the college were super supportive. My academic adviser there was supportive, too. They both told me that I am smart, easy outgoing, and I will be doing great. They promised me help and they got me scholarship. I just needed the confidence boost at those moments. I just needed to hear that I am good enough, and I can do it. I excel in one class, I got in honors in the other class, and I realized that I am not that bad. So once I realized that, I took journalism class.

Immigration was very hard, very hard decision for me to make. My biggest concern was my career because my major was journalism, TV journalism, and I was very much career oriented back at home. I already got my first job. My school employed me and everything was looking pretty good. I want to build a nice career, language is my tool, and I need to be able to use my Russian and Ukrainian language skills. All my group mates (we had a group of five girls) wanted to get married and have babies and I was the only one who wanted a job and who didn't want to get married. And I got married first. They all got great jobs and couple years ago one had a job as a journalist in senate, another started working in the really cool magazine, third one was working in a very cool TV show, and I'm the only one who sits at home and does nothing.

I was thinking at the moment to change my occupation to become a nurse. I knew if I would give up my dream about journalism career, I'll be a bitter person and it would affect my marriage, because I feel like I need to give up everything. I will be arguing with Chris that I had to quit my dream job, I have to speak English language, and so on…

If I would totally have to give up my able to make normal money. So, I decided that I don't want to give up and will not go study to be a nurse like everybody else or dental assistant. I decided that I am going to keep searching for opportunities to use my journalism degree here in the U.S. So, I took some ESL classes and college gave me scholarship to go to MCC. I took couple of classes there for free, and I took journalism and English composition class. The journalism class has had a requirement about writing article for school newspaper. One of the assignments for me was to go and write an article about school's TV station which is an MCTV. It was perfect task because I already had this idea for the show about student sharing their experiences regarding education, where students can prepare their stories and send them to different countries in different universities.

I was looking for an opportunity to find someone who is interested in my idea. When I decided to write an article about MCTV station, I scheduled an interview with their director. During the interview I told him about my idea and he loved it, so we started working on this concept and then six months later we started a TV show. It took for me two years to start my first work as a journalist here in the US. I had an idea about this international TV show when students would produce their story, talking about different traditions. For example, for Christmas here we do luminaries, decorating the houses, we have Santa at every mall. Ukrainian students made all their show about Kolyadka and Shedrivka, how they are going to Kolyadavaty. Every family made 12-course lean meal and everyone wait for the first star to begin celebrate New Year. Russian students made for example something like New Years, like New Years is the biggest holiday.

When my daughter Sasha was born, we decided she should have a choice when she will grew up to choose if she wants to be an American or Ukrainian citizen. For now she can get two passports and then when she turns 18, she can decide what she wants. I hope when she will be bigger, older, she can go to Ukraine, like Chris said, and may go to the kindergarten there or for one semester to the school. I would like for Sasha to learn Russian language so she can speak and read in Russian. I think I can try speaking Russian with Sasha, but once we are together at the dinner table, we are going to speak English.

I'm working part time at the college, so just up to 20 hours and I am doing just one show monthly. College doesn't have money to give me a full-time position. Right now I'm on maternity leave, so we are taking a break, so we are done for the summer but then we are going to start over again in September. I don't have any benefits, so I am very thankful that Chris has benefits and I don't need to worry about that. But it is not enough money for us and I would like to make more. So I still looking for another job and I am thinking what can I do, what can I do? Because at MCTV… whatever I accomplished is good, but it is something I already accomplished and I need to keep moving. Moreover, I felt like with MCTV, I am not going to get anywhere anytime soon because it still government funded organization and they don't have enough funds. I feel that I already have to be grateful that they keep this project and they don't get it closed.

Now when I have a baby, she is occupying my time, but besides the baby, there should be something for my career. I can't keep working like now when I am working for the Ross store, just doing their money in the morning and books and whatever. But still that's not why I got my master's education so I can work for Ross department and stuff like that… So, I decided to go back to school, but I didn't want to change my major too

much. I decided to take a class for video editing because it is more technical part but of the same area of my interest. I already took one class and it was really hard because I was already pregnant at that time. I did not succeed in it, so I have to retake the class or take a couple of other classes. Good news is that I talk to my boss at MCTV and he will give me small projects to work on. Hopefully, I will continue doing my 180 View and also do some video editing for them and that would give me a new opportunity to start completely new and different path. And it is cool because I already have my producing experience behind me and I am going to be a much better editor because I do have an ideas how product suppose to look and now I will have ability to physically make it happen. In the future, if I can go to other channels, hopefully I can get a regular 40 hours per week job that pay normal money and I will feel myself like a human.

Chris is not that rich, so I need to work. I have to work. He is working two jobs and he is doing everything possible so I can work as little as possible and I can focus on my education and my career. But at the same time, I am that kind of women who needs to be in partnership with my husband. I don't want to be a dependent person even if I could, even if he tells me I don't need to worry about money. I can't, I want to be a partner, and I want for us to be equal. I want to help him as much as he helps me. We help a lot for my family members and we want to travel, but there is never extra money. And we have all of these plans for Sasha to go and live with my family in Ukraine or planning to invest in her education, because I believe education is number one thing. So she would need a private school, for example. I don't know what she will need yet, but we will learn her needs once she is get older.

Svetlana

I came here two weeks later after I had turned 55 years old. It was a special time, 1999. Right after USSR was destroyed and the Ukraine become an independent country. If I remember correctly, it was a huge crisis not only in Ukraine, but in all post-soviet countries. Normal life that we lived there was destroyed. My husband's brother who lived in the US applied for his documents right after the crush of USSR. He got the refugee status in 1980 because he is Jewish. Most of my husband's family moved here, but we weren't rushing. At this time my mother was living with us and she didn't feel well. We made a decision to move to the United States after my mother died. We got an interview at American Embassy in 1995 and there was a waiting time for the paperwork to be processed. Finally, we got a refugee status.

I was a doctor- psychotherapist and I had my private practice at this time. I was very close to retirement age. My husband was working as a tutor in mathematics. Policies and requirements for the doctors were changing rapidly due to changes in politics. Government do not want spend money for health care anymore, so shortcuts in assisting patients need become more and more part of practices. I don't like this way because you need to have a lot of time for one patient to help him improve his psychology. Pills never work as effectively as patient- to-doctor private talking and analyzing. Then my mom died in 1997 and we decided move to the United States.

I would not work further as a doctor, so I found some easier job for myself. I started work at the family as a personal nanny. It is a common job here for the immigrants. I worked in one family for seven years and then I was introduced to two sisters who had two children each. So, with my educational background, I was hired on

the spot. I was alternating days between families. I would watch kids for a few hours a day and then for extra pay, I would clean and cook. Parents in both families are working in a medical field. I am still working there even now. Their mothers sometimes ask me for professional help. One of them is the doctor - psychologist, psycho-therapist for adults and young kids. She asks me sometimes to help her to write history of the patient illness if case is going to the court. She asks me to do audit for what she is writing in the case for the judge.

I realize soon after moving to the U.S. that I could not make a doctor career here. I was working too much back in Ukraine and I already achieved my purpose I had in the life. It is too bad if someone didn't realized what they have to achieve in their life, but I had done it already in my professional life, so it is not that bad. We have in Sunnyvale Institute of East Medicine, and it takes a couple years to study there for a degree to become Naturopathic Professional. I could go there to update my degree, but I do not want to work with Russian speaking patients. In another hand, to work with Americans as a family doctor, you have to learn a lot of new things. I know I could, but already worked for almost 30 years and I just tired. Moreover, then I found out what I would need to do and it is a huge workload not only psychologically and physically, but also financially. Also, nobody was going to help me with any issue. We don't have a credit history at this time. If there was a financial support to take the course at the East Medical University, I will be going for it.

When I came here, I knew that I had to learn language and I could do it because I like to read and I was watching TV and listening to the radio. I do not want to be a nurse as many of Russian doctors' immigrant done. I worked as a nurse while I was at

university, and we did some internship in few departments at Ukrainian hospitals: surgery, delivery, etc… I have an official diploma for Register Nurse. I worked as a nurse until I finished my doctor's degree. I worked half-time as a nurse in throat-nose department, university health department, and psychology department, which later reflected on career I choose for myself. Then I worked as a doctor in the government and had my private practices. At one point I was a head of department and a main doctor at psychiatric clinic. Managing a lot of patients taking a lot of energy and is time consuming, still it very rewarding simultaneously. You should manage you time so you will not only benefit your clients, but also your family. It is a constant dilemma to keep yourself aware what and where you can do.

I am the person who is always working with other people, so I learned long time ago to remove myself from that is not good for me, to switch to something different, to see correctly the life. With the age our body changes, it is like if you are eating the soup and you feel that it has missing something. You should than just add those ingredients so you can eat it and enjoy. So, let your imagination work. If you know a person and you do not like something about them, then try to adjust so you could work with them without using too much of your energy. In the past I did worked a lot with myself to keep myself with a good health. I am working today with REKA and I am satisfied for results I have. Overall, the person has to know how to relax and balance their own energy.

I am keeping cultural traditions from Ukraine. I still cook the same food and we are hardly eating out. We need to follow diets at our ages. We do celebrate all of our traditional holidays: Paska, Eastern, Post, etc… Dime worked for Russian company so he doesn't speak English but I do. The family is always comes first and we have family

time often. Our cultural beliefs regarding how to manage the money and maintain health stay the same, traditional way. We do not use credit card unless it is a necessity.

When we moved here, Dima was able to take his daughter and her family with us because she is his biological child. My daughter, Lera, was left behind with her husband as she is not a part of blood line. We had submitted paperwork few years ago, but because she is not Jewish and not blood-related, the process taking much longer time. We are waiting for them to come here with the hope. I have a grandson who is 11 years old and I do talk to them every day. I also go to visit them once a year for a month. I try to send them money as much as I can because they do need a financial help. So, I did not lose a personal contact with my daughter and grandson. Hopefully soon they are going to be approved for emigration and be able to move here where there are more opportunities for them. My daughter is a doctor and she also has a degree as ultrasound technician, so when she comes here, she would be able to get quick classes and go to work.

I am not regretting about immigration to the U.S. Overall the life here and people interactions compare to our country way much better. In Ukraine they were looking at elderly people with the question, "Why are you still alive?" Even you know so much and have a great experience, and your memory is still working, nobody needs you as soon as you retired. It is a government politics there for today. Here they are not going to let you die, but if you want to live at the certain level, you have to have a goal and move toward it. Here they have all of the laws and support that can protect you.

It will be great if we can learn more about education system in the U.S. at the time we coming here and see what we can do efficiently. Education here costs so much and it takes a long time to get a degree. You know that good job is a pleasure, and an education

is a step stone for it. Therefore, you need to pay for your pleasure. So you are paying for your choices. I believe EE immigrant women are able to achieve their personal and professional goals here, in the U.S. However, everyone does need to understand that each of us, depending on each generation, have various upbringing and experiences. It is important to help educated immigrants women to not only survive psychologically here, but also be helped to understand the life here.

Tatyana

I came to the U.S. in 1999 with my husband from the Russia. Part of his family was living here already. They are Jews and they filled out paperwork for family reunion. So we came here with refugee's status.

I did not finish my master degree; I was almost done with it, and have just 4 months toward to graduation. I was working in economics field, but my education was in computer science. I was working in economics field because one of the family friends offers that job to me so it was a good opportunity. But soon I moved to the U.S. Here I took six weeks course in English language and started to look for a job. First, I was looking for a job in economics field because of my experience, more in banking, and I did found few short-term ones. I do not like it at all and therefore decided to get my computer education up to date. It was right at the computer boom time and all of my friends were saying that it is not hard to find an employment if you have a degree in computer science. At that time all I was thinking about was to find the job not by what I like but that paid the most amount of money. I realize that in audit I would work a long time before I could make any money, but in software programming I will make good money from the beginning of career. I took some computer courses; they were intense

and very efficient. Even the school was helping to find internships for the start. As I said, it was a computer boom and computer companies were taking everybody on the beginners' level with very little knowledge. So if you get a job, you just get more and more of experiences and building your career up. As for today, I am still here in the computer field.

I was taking some English language classes back in Russia because I knew that I was moving to the U.S., so I started learning English to be prepared ahead. In college the material was given to us in English and teacher only talks in English, so even if you don't want to, you have to talk in English. My friends helped me to prepare for the job interview. I was memorizing sentences and all of my friends were coaching me so I can talk and recall the questions that HR may be going to ask and my answers to it. I had a few interviews where HR people were telling me that they can't understand me. So I was practicing questions and answers again and again. What I always liked about interviews I had that HR people were patient and if I said that I do not understand the question, they would rephrase it so it was a huge help for me.

I had a goal and I understood that when I will find a job, I will continue to learn the language. I had good examples in front of my eyes, people I knew who was going through the same accommodation as I was. I had a group of friends who came here before us and who was already gone through tough time. They were supporting me and explaining every step, describing situations that could happen and keeping me away from depression.

Because of my husband's family, I came here not on empty place. It is not like I came alone and I do not know anything here. I came here to be with my husband who

already had friends, who had work, and who already knew something regarding the system. All his friends met through Jewish center where they all took classes in English language and computer classes. Every one of them when they came here would go to the Jewish center, introduced themselves, and make friends. So there was a lot of support from everyone. If one person got a job at some place, they were trying by any means to help everyone who needed to get a job at that place. So they helped with classes and they help you with internships as well. I knew that for me, I had to find a job where I would have an American employer. This is the first step that you have to do here. I knew that the others did it before me and I could do it, so there was never any doubt for me.

After September 11, 2001, many of the companies started cutting off jobs. At the same time I was going through a divorce so I was feeling uncertainty in both places. However, even every other company was firing people, I still managed to find a job. I met one person to whom I mentioned that I was looking for a job and he said that he liked one particular company in that field. He said he worked there before, so he asked for my resume and pass it on. At that particular moment the company was hiring, so they called me for an interview. I had an interview and they hired me. So I started working there and I am still working there today.

I am working there for more than 10 years. During this time my company went through a lot of changes, but I am at the same career path. I would not say that I feel secure; there is no security and company still going through changes all the time. But I am not changing my career trajectory. This is career is not my desired one… but I do look at this job as a stepping stone that helps me grow professionally as well as the salary that I earn. I am happy with this job for now… So I am doing all of the enjoyable stuff

after work. So if I would change my job today, I would still be working in the same field but maybe with the bigger career jump. It is just 10 years in one company… people saying that it is time to think about something else… It is time to make decision if I want more of manager responsibilities or more of technical growth…

I think I will choose more of a manager position because I never enjoyed technical aspect of my job… so I am working in not desired field.

Olga

I grow up in the USSR and it was a time when everybody was kind of equal. Everybody adults were working, kids were going to school, we had no unemployment. At that time in the USSR, everything was build in such way that every adult had job and no kids allowed to be not in school. So if kids do not go to school, parents were putting in prison, and kids were taking into orphan houses and placed in school there. So, all of us lived poor and equal. It doesn't matter if you live in family of engineer or workers. There was a little bit divided line, but we lived in the same type of buildings, apartments were next to each other. And we were going to the same schools, which we did not have a choice to choose. My sister and I lived with parents and grandparents in two bedroom apartment. We were lucky to have it; because my parents were engineers, they got two bedroom apartment and most of the people got one bedroom apartment. My sister and I were sleeping in one bed, sharing one bedroom with grandparents. Later, for number of years we were sleeping with my sister in the living room.

USSR had very tough education system in this time. If children could not read and count when they graduated from the first grade, they were taking to another school that was for the kids with the learning disability. The next big test was after the 8th grade

and if kids were doing not well on it, they were just placed into trade school so they were going to learn to be labor workers. And only kids who study well will go to 9 and 10 grades, so after this we can go to the university. You need actually study at school very hard to go through school to be able to go to the university.

My parents were engineers and all members of my family were with master's degree. My sister and I were oriented from early childhood that degree means a lot and it mean we will not have hard labor work and it means we will earn more money. So we were going to school and study very seriously. I was a good student, and after I finished school, I got into university and I got my degree in mechanical engineering. Our degree in mechanical engineer was very different then it is in America because we study economics, we study history, we study philosophy, we study a lot of topics. So our mechanical engineer degree was given us ability to work as a top-level manager in the factories. I like to work for government and this is what I was going after. I was working in government in different departments and one was an unemployment department, another- OSHA department. I started my career as a program manager and I ended as a director of department. So I got into very good level government position.

I married when I was 19 years old and my daughter was born when I was 21. I was feeling very lucky in those time because economical situation in 1980 was a little bit better compare with time when I grow up, and I was able to buy for me two bedroom apartment. For many people my family was very rich because three of us were living in two bedroom apartment and my daughter had her own bedroom. It was very unusual. Many of my friends lived with children in one bedroom apartments.

After the USSR collapsed and situation in Ukraine become very unstable, there was a lot of conflict within the government. Some people who worked in government got into position where you cannot do what they asking you to do because it is illegal and you cannot say no, so it is very complicated and dangerous situation. For me, it ended in a way that I became a political refugee in America. When I migrated, I was 43 years old. By the time I migrated, I was divorced with my husband and I migrated here with my daughter. I applied for refugee status when I came to America. I was not prepared at all for the future in the U.S. It happened very fast and very unexpectedly. In my understanding of the future, I was expecting that I have my master's degree from Ukraine, I have many years of experience as a top-level manager in government, I am good with managing people, so I can easy to find good job in the U.S. When I came to America, I was hoping that my experience and my education would bring me to the place where I would start from what I reached already and grow up. However, after I applied for my refugee status and I was granted asylum, I went to special place that work with refugee and they told me that I have to have job. And I say yes, of course, I want to have job, where I can start? And they say to me that I can start as a cleaning dishes person in the fast food restaurant. I was very upset; I thought it was a bad joke. They told that nobody will value my education or experience; I should start everything from the bottom. Of course, it was big hit for me, I was totally unprepared for this, I was totally disagreeing with this position. I was not mentally prepared to do labor job at all. I get into position where I need to take care of myself and start searching and navigating what I can do to do best for me. I do not want to be in the position where I would have depression and regrets about coming to the U.S.

I met few Russians who were living in the U.S. for a while, and they told me that here many colleges have government program for refugees, so I can study without money. I look for the college and I found one college that accepted my documents to take ESL classes for free. I was lucky to meet wonderful people there. I almost did not speak English at this time, but when I show my refugee documents, they took my documents and they enrolled me in college in two weeks. I started taking English as a second language. Next, I took some business classes. Also, I met one Russian woman who was living here in Mesa few years. She could speak English so she took me by hand and she walked with me from the office to the office, helping me to look for a job. We found one SPA office where was a nice owner. She was sympathizing to me as a women- refugee and she took me to be accounting at her business. So I started my accounting work and it was $6.00 per hour. It was very low payment, but I was extremely happy. At least I was doing an office job and not cleaning the dishes.

Next, I started working in college as a work study student. One of my friends explained me the way to evaluate my Ukrainian degree by American standards. I did it and enrolled into ASU for second master's degree. My second master is in education. And I got my job at Arizona state government. So, basically, just because I was lucky to meet good people who helped me, I was able to navigate through unknown to me system and achieve my goal in eight years. My goal was to have a job that will be equal the one I have had in Ukraine. So basically, today I am actually working in the office and it is not what I prefer to do, but I hope that in my future I can build better career, and I have a hope for that. I guess I am not house wife; I am like workaholic. For me it is boring to clean and cook at home.

I guess I have strength inside me and I was searching for help and opportunities. But not everybody can be strong, so if people are not strong, they actually need support; they need good support and guidance here. Here is no help to educated immigrants with finding job at all. System not utilizes our knowledge and our experiences as adults. You just on your own...

My sister with her family leaves in Ukraine and they do not want to come here because they know from me that the life is not easy here. They are not ready for change as I have had. So we talking on the telephone, Skype, but they prefer to stay in Ukraine. And my daughter, after she moved to the U.S. was struggling with losing her friends in Ukraine. Of course, it is totally different social life here. But I think that one day, she will go back to Ukraine and Russia and see life there and she will understand why I wanted to go to America. Probably, when she will grew up more will understand that I did this for her future and also for the future of her kids, my grandkids. I want for my grandkids to live in the country better than Ukraine.

Masha

I left my home when I was 17 because my mom was fitting with my stepfather. I just graduated from high school and had a boyfriend I moved to live with. He was 22 years old, 5 years older than I was. We had a relationship; he was very supportive. At 21 I had a child and soon after we got separated. By this time I was almost done with my studying at the university. My mother was helping me for a while, taking care of my daughter until I graduated from university.

I graduated from pedagogical university in Kiev, Ukraine, with a master in philology education. I am a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature and foreign

literature. I wanted to start teaching, but then I decided to learn English so I could teach it. When I graduated from the university, I had a small baby. My daughter was born when I was 21 years old. I was taking care of her; therefore, I never worked as a teacher of Ukrainian language. When my child was one year old, I went to get a second education while on the maternity leave. And therefore, I got a second education in English literature. I was taking classes for two years, so it was hard to learn the language while being a nighttime student. There were different study groups and international groups where I can practice English. I signed contract with one bridal agency and this is where I have met my future husband. This bridal agency is for Ukrainian girls who want to married foreigners. Anyway, that is how I met him and he was very persistent with his intention to marry me. He called me twice a day and came to see me every month. He asked me to marry him, and I agreed. I moved here in 2006 and we got married here, in America.

When I came here, my English was not very good and I went to college and took ESL classes. My husband did not want me to go to school because he likes me to be at home and take care of the house. But I wanted to. I told him I would like to work on my English and he agreed. I understood that I cannot be a teacher here because I have a strong accent and I do not feel comfortable to be in entrusted by kids who speak English much better than I do. I knew that I wouldn't be a teacher here; I did not feel confident enough. So I started to look around and I was thinking that I always like medicine, but in Ukraine it was impossible for money reason. I wanted to be in the dental field and I was thinking about something stable, debating between being a dental hygienist or being a nurse. I went to do volunteering work in the hospital, but I did not really like it. Next, I

went to the dental clinic for homeless and I volunteered there for ten month and I really like it. Finally, I choose the field but my husband didn't really want me to study. I got started general education courses in school here, and he was already against it also, because I was receiving scholarships and was able to proceed with degree I choose for me. My husband felt that my school was interfering with my time devoted to him. Moreover, I was asking him to pick up my daughter from the school if I had a schedule conflict. I transferred my degree from Ukraine and they accepted it as a bachelor's in teaching and master's in Ukrainian language and literature. For the first two years I was doing everything tirelessly and then I applied to the hygiene school in Mesa, was accepted, and graduated in 2012. I am working right now part time, but I still have a hard time to find a good job. I wasn't employed for all the time I lived in the U.S. until I graduated from the school. I got my diploma, license in dentistry, and it took me 9 to 10 month till I found a job. I would like to have a full-time job as soon as possible.

For the last 7 years, I was visiting my family in Ukraine four times and my mom was here twice. I am lucky that I was there and I realize that I prefer to live here, in the U.S. Unfortunately, I have being divorce with my husband now. He decided to move to another country when I was in school, and I decided to stay here, in America, because I want to be independent. I want to make money and I want to become somebody here. I do believe that here is better future for my daughter and if you study hard in the school and you work hard, you will succeed, eventually. It is not like in Ukraine. Here is more opportunities. I still am looking for the opportunity for myself and my child. Two years ago I received my citizenship. My current boyfriend is from India and he speaks Russian

because he went to medical school in Crimea. He lived in Ukraine for 7 years while attending university.

I still celebrate New Year with my Russian friends. Also, we celebrate our Easter and I do cook our traditional Ukrainian food. Ukrainian people like to be healthy, so we cooking at home. I try to teach to my daughter Russian and Ukrainian languages. We have a lot of Russian books and movies. So I cook myself and my boyfriend cooks as well, but his Indian food. Unfortunately, he likes a lot of fry and oily salads and it is not as healthy as my cooking. We have a rule at home "once done with your work, you can play now long", I don't know if this is cultural one, but it definitely disciplines my daughter. She is very responsible at her age. She has some responsibilities like cleaning dishes, taking trash out. I try to raise a responsible human being, a person who has values and makes good choices. With the right choices she can make a good future.

My experience from last seven years have shown me that I am strong and people from outside told me that. My divorce was very bad, because my husband put me through bankruptcy and left without any money at the moment I was in school. But I did it. I survive. Definitely, I am not the weak one. I want a simple life and I want a future for my child.

I am now 33 years old. I have master and bachelor degrees, have more certifications then majority of hygienists: alia certified, zoom certified, anesthesia, and more. But because of my accent and not perfect English, I am still unemployed for a long time. Today, I realized that I wasted my time going for basic degree at community college. I should to go to the dentist school in first place. I am working part-time now, but I am on the call. Hours are not stable, two weeks ago I had worked six days straight.

This week I was called for two emergencies appointments for half a day only. I never know when I will work, so I never can plan my day. However, I do believe I will find my way. I have a boyfriend now and I do believe in some miracle.

Alena

I never plan to go to America; it is just happened. I planned to graduate from the university, to find a job in the bank or private company, and work in my field of economics. One day I went to a marriage agency as a lot of girls do. I didn't see that it would become something serious; I just went there to have some fun, to go to these socials events when American men coming to see Ukrainian brides and to practice my English. I was not taking it seriously; I was there as a bride for maybe three years or more. But one day I met there my future husband and this ended up to be serious relationship. He proposed to me marry him, we did paperwork, and that is how I came to the U.S. First, I get a bride visa and next we got married here, in the U.S. I moved here after my graduation from the university. I graduated in 2007 from Ukrainian Humanitarian University and I got master's degree in finances. I worked a little bit in the bank before I moved here.

I told to my mother that the American men proposed me marry him and we are thinking about filing the documents for the bride visa. Nobody in my family believed me, of course. They did not take it seriously at all. Later, when I went with my mother to Kiev embassy to get my fiancé visa, they realize that his intention was serious. My mother said she will support me in my choice because it is my life I need to live. She said I should go if I feel it is my person. My relatives do not believe in me because I am very quiet, shy person. They did not expect anything good could happen to me. But I was the

one who was going to America. It was big news for everybody, and finally everybody supported me with my decision and everyone has a hope that I will be happy in my marriage.

When I came to the U.S., I did not work because I have just fiancé visa. When we got married, I applied for a green card, but only after few months from being married, because of our financial situation. We did not have enough many for application fees. I got my first green card in April of 2010, more than a year after I came to the U.S. All this time I was staying home because I cannot drive and did not have a green card. I understand that nobody rich here and I knew that my husband belongs to a middle class, but I didn't know what means middle class in America. I realized that I need to work soon after we got married; it is not easy for my husband to support me. Even with my part-time job with pay very little money, it still helps for our budget. My husband is older me for 13 years older and he has a technical school with degree in electronics. I do not like people here in the beginning. I was missing home so bad and everything was irritating me. Now I understanding that you need to accept another culture, different way of living, you need to accept to be able to live happy here.

When I just moved here, I was assuming that I can translate my degree into English language and go work for the bank, but then I realized that my language wasn't good enough to have a job right away. Later I started thinking that maybe working at the bank is too much for me, that I should start with the lower step. That is why I got my job as the cashier at the ROSS store, so I can talk to people more. I still did not translate my diploma because it takes time and money. I think I do not need it right now, but maybe I

will need it later. I more want to have a baby than the job. My husband told me work fewer hours because I get tired easy, so he telling me to take it easy, do not work so hard.

I do not really want to go back to school. It is too much for me. It is too expensive. Moreover, I already have a degree. Why do I need to go for something else? If I want to have a career and it requires some classes, some credits, I will do it, but not another degree. Back in Ukraine I really didn't have a dream for my future career. I was working in the bank because my parents have a connection here and this is where I went to start a career.

I definitely can say that I feel better here in the U.S. both emotionally and physically; also, I feel more confident here. Even I know I am immigrant here and maybe have some adjustments and accent, but I still feel very confident in my future and my career path I can do here. When I just started to look for a job here I was crying, I thought I was going to wash toilets in McDonalds. I had this impression that I am not qualifying for at anything; I am not speaking well English language. It is not like in Ukraine and Russia, where you need to be beautiful, you need to know right people to get a job. Here, it is different. I need speak English, have education, some experience, and right skills to do a job.

I would like to do evaluation of my degree from Ukraine in the future. One of my friends gave me an idea after I have baby to stay home and take some classes online. I would like to go for book-keeping, or accounting. Then maybe to find some part-time job, when I am going to stay with baby at home for a couple years, then finally get some full-time job in accounting. So far it is my plan.

I am working now for two and half years. After working for a while as a cashier, I became a front and back supervisor for ROSS. And we bought a car so it gave me more opportunities to look for a job. I was looking at assistant manager position and thinking if I want to get this position, but soon I realized I do not want it because there will be more hours, more responsibilities, and it is just more difficult to hold. And I do not want to be making career in retail. I think I would like to work in the office, with full benefits package. But now everything is going to change because now I am thinking about filing the paperwork for a citizenship and having a baby, so I do not want like to make a career now.

If I would have children in Ukraine, they will be going to the regular school and we would end up saving money to pay for them to go to the university, like everybody. But here I am planning for my kids to go to the public school and later, depending on our financial situation, for them to do some career and make good money. I would like for them to have grants or free money to go to the university. I believe they are going to be smart and make some money for the education.