

**Process of Letting Go During Two Major Life  
Transitions: Experience of Immigration and  
Developing Autonomy of One's Children**

by

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A dissertation submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree  
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**Abstract**  
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The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate how the process of letting go unfolds over time using the two transitional periods of parenthood and immigration. Specifically, this study aimed to explore how individuals conceptualize the various personal changes they encountered during the process of immigration and also when confronted with their children's increasing separation and independence. The letting go process incorporates both the mourning for an old object and the integration of a new object in the system of ego functioning. The term object includes human and non-human environments, as well as constellations of roles that are characteristic for the individual.

The psychobiographical method was employed when interviewing ten participants for this study, all of whom belonged to a non-clinical population of Eastern-European immigrants and were parents of child(ren) between latency age and the early adulthood years. Each interview has been analyzed in depth for themes related to transitional experiences.

The main findings of this study lie in the area of the role of self-concept, as a constellation of beliefs about one's self, plays in the process of letting go of an object. It appeared that only when the change of some important aspects of the self-concept has

been registered on a conscious level, can the letting go process actually occur. An individual style of letting go was evident in all but two participants of this research. This finding that has important clinical implications for therapeutic practice for immigrant, as well as non-immigrant, populations, because it allows a therapist to conceptualize the specific difficulties of a patient, who is feeling stuck in certain relationships, or who exhibits counter phobic abrupt separation from an object, as difficulties in separation from an object per se, thus creating a short-cut to the core of the issue.

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*It is impossible to step into the same river  
twice – we change, the water changes.*

*( Plato)*

*Surely, we can try. And our feet are going to feel  
the same – cold and wet. (A friend's of mine  
sarcastic response)*

## **Introduction**

The words in this epigraph reflect the intrinsic "changeability" of everything. They didn't seem like an abstract philosophical musing to me as I was looking at what used to be my house, after coming home to visit after a couple of years of immigration. I was anticipating this trip as a much needed refueling experience. At first, walking down the familiar streets, seeing old apple trees and new cats, felt like only that reality was real, and those years that I just had spent in America were a dream. I was not even sure whether I was the dreamer myself, the whole experience of emigration felt so distant and vague. From that state of floating in the warmth of familiarity, the pain of seeing my house, as a renovated modern creature, was ever sharper, almost or actually physically painful. Soon those impressions were taken over by the revelation of a much more tacit, but nevertheless powerful change in myself. I have noticed how different my reactions were around my friends and strangers. My relationships with time were altered. I felt myself to be more abrupt, harsh, and goal-oriented. Of course, these changes in me did not happen overnight during my visit. The first years of immigration, I was so busy surviving, catching up and mapping out a path for myself, I had not been able to reflect on what was happening to my self-perception and my perception of others. To reflect meant to stop, to step out of the immediacy and let up the tension of the moment. However, as in surfing, relieving the tension before I caught what seemed

like the right wave, felt dangerous. That trip, being a safe territory, allowed me to pause, and at the same time provided me with a framed background, against which the above-mentioned changes were far more noticeable as coming from a changed relationship with time and space, a changed hierarchy of values.

”From now on, I will be made, like a mosaic, of fragments – and my consciousness of them”, says Eva Hoffman in her reflections on the immigrant’s self-experience (1989). In my view, the parts of the old mosaic, of how I used to be in the world and within myself, were jumbled substantially in an attempt to understand and adjust to a new set of circumstances. How did it happen? Is it possible to feel such a substantial change over such a short period of time? Would the changes have been so drastic and have taken the same route had I not emigrated?

All those questions stirred my interest in looking into the experience of immigration with its intrinsic processes of uprooting, transportation, replanting, acclimatization, and development that take place within an individual (Akhtar, 1984). The literature on immigration concentrates on a variety of issues, such as, adaptation and assimilation, culture shock and its implications for identity formation, immigration and loss. The phenomenological description of the individual transformation and its mechanisms is lacking. This study will attempt to fill this gap by exploring the experience of immigration with an assumption that both trends – leaving and reattachment - are internally inseparable.

I would like to introduce an exploratory hypothesis to which I will return on a more conceptual level in the literature review section. The above-mentioned changes in self-perception and perception of others might be linked to or indicative of more

fundamental changes in self-concept that in turn might be in the causal relationship with the process of letting go, as it occurs in immigration. In addition, I believe that changes in self-concept serve as a means of the letting go process, as it happens in many instances across the individual's life span.

In order to examine this hypothesis, another instance of the letting go process is necessary which would be similar to immigration. The experience of parenthood, if considered from the very beginning, offers important parallels, in terms of letting go of a child, as the child gradually individuates and separates from the parents. While these similarities will be discussed in the literature review in greater detail, here I just want to note, in general, the resemblance in the decision-making processes involved in transitions, a certain amount of free will, and the gradualness that co-exists with apparent abruptness in both instances of letting go.

My clinical practice in the Mental Health Center at Federation for Employment and Guidance Services (F.E.G.S.) offers a rich field for observation of immigration adjustment patterns and parenting issues. I work with a wide range of immigrant populations originating from Latin America, Eastern and Western Europe. It is difficult to count statistically, but both topics – the inability to attain sufficient separation from the country of origin or adjust to the new country and the struggle in dealing with their children's signs of autonomy - are among the ones that appear to bring the most pain and dysfunction to individuals and families.

The literature (Yaglom, 1993; Lomsky-Feder, & Rappoport, 2000) offers theoretical insights about the causal link between the struggle that immigrants go through in their separation from their countries of origin and their inability later on to parent

effectively, specifically around the issues of developing autonomy and the perspective of their children's melting into the alien society and culture. Another widely mentioned topic is a cultural discrepancy that forces immigrants from so-called collectivistic societies (such as some countries of Latin America and Eastern Europe regions) to exercise control over their children even more vigorously when facing the dangers of the too extreme autonomy of the "individualistic" society of the US (Marlin, 1994). However, in the clinical population, individuals tend to report serious difficulties in their parenting experiences that appeared independently prior to their immigration (when children were born before the immigration to the US). In terms of cultural differences, as I can derive from my own limited experience, the discrepancies within any one population appear to be wider than between different populations, which, of course, does not cancel cultural differences in general.

The percentage of patients that report problems in both areas is too high to be coincidental. This fact suggested the existence of a third variable, namely that there is an individual style of letting go of an object – a country or a child in those instances. An attempt to understand the underlying processes might become a first step in the development of a concept of a "letting go" process. This concept may then become applicable to other instances of the long-term separation from an important object leading to a better understanding of the forces involved in this process, and ways to detect and treat difficulties in those areas.

This document is organized in the following way. After this introduction, I will briefly present my first subject's history of parenthood and immigration, in order to be able to illustrate, using her examples, the theoretical key points throughout the literature

review. In the literature review, I will discuss immigration and parenthood as stages of adult development. Relevant concepts of loss and mourning will be presented through the lenses of the letting go process as it occurs in immigration and parenthood. I will address essential theoretical viewpoints on the origins and mechanisms of self-concept formation, in order to prepare the ground for explorations of this phenomenon in the data analysis. The Literature Review chapter will be followed by a preliminary analysis of the first participant's narrative, which will serve as an example of the early stage of data analysis. In the Methodology chapter, I will touch upon a theoretical foundation of a psychobiographical method; describe the selection of the participants, the format and procedure of the interview, and data analysis.

## **Tanya's\* History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Tanya is a forty three-year old woman who emigrated from Ukraine in 1998. She lives in a predominately Russian-speaking neighborhood with her husband of 22 years and their 21-year-old daughter. Tanya's parents and parents-in-law live within walking distance. This fact was mentioned four times in the interview in the context of the biggest achievements and highlights of Tanya's life. Her daughter graduated from college this year and is currently looking for a job in the field of law, which could possibly become the focus of her graduate studies. Tanya herself is a full-time graduate student in social work. As part of her training, she works in an outpatient clinic. She described having difficulties in this area related to being a novice and feeling uncertain about her skills. She also works part-time as a case manager for a non-profit organization. Her responsibilities include service coordination for individuals affected by the September 11. She reported feeling fulfilled by her work and responsibilities.

Tanya grew up in a small city in Ukraine, which was less than sixty miles away from Chernobyl's nuclear plant. She spoke of her parents' profession of teaching, and provided several examples of how their profession filled her world – she didn't know anything else. Tanya graduated with the degree in teaching and got married at age 24. She stated that there was no major decision about child planning. As it was expected, within a year of getting married, Tanya gave birth to their only daughter. Her daughter's early childhood years were uneventful. Tanya stayed home for eighteen months, the maximum possible maternity leave that allowed her not to lose her job. She changed the school where she was working before for the one that was across her house in order to be closer to her daughter. Tanya herself, her mother-in-law, and her grandmother all shared child-care responsibilities up until her daughter went to day-care at age three.

Tanya described her daughter as spoiled by the attention she got from the extended family. Her daughter was the only grandchild for both sets of parents for many years. Tanya emphasized one particular aspect of her daughter's personality from the very early age. When the little girl was able

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\* The participant's name has been changed to protect her anonymity

to verbalize this, she would express her desire to do something or go somewhere, which often included adults making efforts to accommodate her. As soon as she would be dressed or the long-awaited for bus had arrived, she would change her mind and express it loudly .

Tanya described her daughter's first school year as a difficult period. She attributed the difficulty to a very demanding first-grade teacher. Later on, her daughter had no problems in school, which, except for a short period of time, has always been the same school where Tanya worked. The problems started up again when her daughter switch into a school where she did not fit. She felt like a scapegoat there. Having always been close to each other, her daughter had chosen Tanya as her the only confidante at this time.

From her daughter's early latency up until now, Tanya continues to encourage her to pursue activities which Tanya herself enjoys. As a rule, Tanya describes her daughter as less successful in those activities, including college studies, than Tanya herself. Tanya mentioned several times how painfully aware about this issue her daughter is.

In 1986, after the catastrophe at the Chernobyl nuclear plant, the family made the decision to flee from their hometown due to the serious health concerns. Tanya's family was considering Israel as a possible destination because of the lack of any other choices at the time. They also considered Siberia at one point, but it did not work out. Then the family received an opportunity to move to a large seaport city about 200 miles south of Chernobyl. Tanya and her daughter moved there first and were followed by Tanya's husband who transferred there with his job. Their parents were left behind with the thought that the whole extended family would move to Israel after a couple of years. They spent eight years in Odessa\*\*, while continuing their efforts to search for ways to emigrate abroad. As soon as Tanya's in-laws managed to receive permission to enter the United States and were able to send her family an affidavit of support, Tanya, her husband, and their daughter immigrated. A year later they were able to bring Tanya's parents to New York as well.

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\*\*The name of the city has been changed

Tanya emphasized several times during the interview, that her immigration had been easy and definitely successful. Both her husband and she were able to find jobs within four months after their arrival. Her husband's job is related to his professional field and Tanya herself has never been without a job for more than a couple of months. All her jobs were in the field of social services, which she considers to be related to her teaching experience in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Tanya described her graduate studies as a career necessity, as well as a good example for her daughter. She stated that it is a professional field she is not disgusted by. Graduate school, as well as her work experience, helps her not to feel like such an outcast in America. According to Tanya, some immigrants might feel this way, but less so in New York. She reported feeling very proud when she is able to earn high grades in school or to serve as a liaison between Americans in need and the system of social services.

#### Interview Observations

Tanya looks stated age. She is substantially overweight. Tanya's style of relating to me throughout the interview deserves special attention. She expressed constant worry whether she was providing needed information – she was concerned if we were “moving in the right direction with the necessary speed”. She was trying to answer the questions, but, by doing that, she presented me with a narrative that was ‘chopped’ and lacked cohesive flow. Tanya also was overtly concerned with my opinions especially around child-rearing issue. However, even if I have had intentions to answer her questions, she never left a space for me to do so – her questions had a rhetorical flavor in terms of her not being interested in the real answers. Her intense helpfulness was accompanied by evasiveness of the content of our interactions.

## Chapter I: Literature Review

### Immigration and Parenthood in the Adult Development

*Using migration as a metaphor, human development itself can be seen as a succession of migrations whereby one gradually moves further and further away from his first objects. (Grinberg and Grinberg “Psychoanalytic perspectives on migration and exile.”)*

In order to be able to speak eloquently about letting go as a particular dimension of either parenthood or the immigration process, these phenomena must first be placed in the context of adult development. In talking about parenthood through the lenses of adult development, I want to concentrate briefly on Therese Benedek’s (1959) conceptualization of parenthood as a phase of adult development with certain developmental goals and tasks. Benedek put forward an idea that, at every developmental stage, the parents identify with their child’s needs by identifying with their own experiences of going through the same stage in their childhood. The parents’ empathy is rooted in their experiences of being a care recipient in their own early infancy or other relevant age. According to this author, parental ability to be a “giving” agent, the patience and the care are derived from the primary identifications with his or her mother figure. “These were fantasies before; now with the actuality of motherhood (or fatherhood) they are tested in reality.” (1959, p.396)

Benedek talks about two qualitatively different forms of experience that are revived in parenthood. One is the gratifying role of parenting that is reinforced by the child’s success. The child growth provides reinforcement to the joy of the experience of parenting, on the one hand. On other hand, it provides the parent with confidence about

his or her role. The other set of experiences refers to the ambivalent issues in the parent and in the child. The parent's frustrations, when he or she was the child and in symbiotic relationship with his or her parent, led to the incorporation of ambivalent feelings and negatively loaded self-representations, which formed an ambivalent core. Benedek contrasts this line of development to the "normal development" of motherhood, which allows for the consolidation of various developments based on the sense of self-confidence as a parent. The ambivalent core, according to Benedek, leads to disturbances in parental roles that bring about the "implanting: of this ambivalent core into the child's psychic organization by the means of introjection.

In terms of a child developing autonomy, Benedek's model proposes two trends that are implicit in the above-stated nature of parent's empathic understanding of a child through reviving his/her own childhood experience. When a parent is facing the child's each developmental milestone, that brings greater independence to the child, he can re-experience once again the desire to be independent from his own parents derived from his own experience during that time through the mechanisms of identification with the child. These "old" aspirations of independence contribute to his healthy satisfaction when observing a striving and more independent child. Through identification with the next developmental stage, the parent may encourage independent strivings in the child. This identification allows to overcome a desire to preserve the primary unity state. The second, more pathological, trend comes to light when a vulnerable parent is able to predict that the child's independence will expose parental mistakes and misconceptions by questioning the parental authority or by the child's own difficulties. This threat to a parent's self-esteem may lead to the increase in the strictness of his or her super-ego and

intensify preexisting sensitivities to real and imaginary faults. As Benedek (1957) points out, the child's ego seems to be weakest in those areas consistent with unresolved conflicts with the caregiver. The parent-child relationships develop relatively smoothly up until the point when the child reaches the developmental level at which the parent becomes profoundly insecure in this relationship. This insecurity brings about severe distortions of the parent-child relationships around the same set of separation-individuation issues that permeate every area of their relationships. However, parenthood offers numerous opportunities to repeat and work through the primary conflicts; and the healthy process of parenting allows for a resolution of those conflicts.

I chose to start out my literature review with Benedek's theory because it brings into clear focus three areas that are crucial for this study. First, it postulates that reciprocal ego development occurs both in the parent and in the child. This was a pioneering statement back when her concept of parenthood as a developmental stage was created, and later gave rise to Colarusso's (1990) concept of parenthood as a component of the third individuation, which becomes apparent in the growing complexity in object ties to children, spouse, and parents. This complexity both allows and requires the reviving and reworking of ontogenetically earlier developmental conflicts and issues. One cannot overestimate the importance of reciprocal development to the current understanding of what's imbedded in parenting for all parties involved. Also, it is necessary to stress this point for the future reference when hypothesizing about development and the remodeling of the self-concept of a parent in the process of letting go of a child.

The second theoretical issue concerns the defensive mechanisms utilized when parents face conflicting developmental tasks. Benedek emphasized that childhood memories revived in the parents fortify the parent identifications with their own parents. The parents' identifications with their own parents have a long history. These identifications formed the core of their ego and superego and remain the ground of the parental position, although different aspects are revived and brought to awareness by the child's changing stages. With regard to the child's individuation, it is crucial to understand the interplay between these double identifications with one's parents and with one's child in parents' attitudes, and to consider their different roles. Developmental conflicts could serve as a catalyst, if not a cause for, the crystallization of particular defensive mechanisms in parents that are now used when dealing with children's contradictory issues about dependency – “in the parent the dynamic processes of parenthood use the already established organizations of the psychic system” (Benedek, 1959, p.415). This study will explore the preliminary hypothesis that similar mechanisms are mobilized when individuals are faced with the necessity of leaving their country of origin. More attention will be paid to the interplay of defensive mechanisms in the data analysis part of this study.

The third important theoretical issue of parent-child relationships can be formulated based on Benedek's thinking is whether the question of the experience of loosening the primary tie to their children is painful, and reminiscent of the process of mourning. These relationships are not only gratifying, but also evocative of memories and identifications of the parent's childhood special unity with their own mother and/or the father. The issue of loss and mourning are also relevant if one is considering the term

“object-loss” pertinent to the situation where a parent has to relinquish certain aspects of child’s dependency from him or her. For the parent, it is both the loss of a special relationship to their child and a revivification of the loss of their own parent.

The idea behind this study was that there are individual styles of the letting go process applied in a similar manner to different instances of partial relinquishing of the object. The object here is defined in a broad sense that includes both human and non-human entities. This broad definition is based on De Vryer’s (1989) concept of attachment to a non-human environment. His concept differs from the classical psychoanalytic view on non-human environment only in its symbolic and defensive form. De Vryer suggests that attachment to the non-human environment (nature, country, a house or a geographical location) develops by the same scenario as the attachment to people, from undifferentiated state through transitional object state to attaining its own relevance. Therefore, a process of mourning for the non-human objects may be as strong as mourning for people. Taking this idea one step further, I propose that the sense of loss may be experienced as a reaction to change in the set of comfortable roles and self-identifications through which an individual defines himself, as well as his sets of beliefs. Initially based on clinical experience and intuitive assumptions, my thoughts about compatibility of experience of immigration and experience of parenthood around the issues of change and loss have found an assuring foundation in the literature, which used the psychoanalytic metaphor of third individuation for both transitions.

The work of Salman Akhtar (1984, 1992, and 1995) served as a basis for the comparison of two processes – parenthood and immigration – from the adult

development point of view. Akhtar (1995) focused on relatively voluntary immigration that takes place in the adult years, when the capacity for intrapsychic separateness had already developed, and when the receiving country was welcoming to a certain extent. He theorized, on a basis of his clinical experience, that only this kind of immigration may be conceptualized as *third individuation*. This term, according to Akhtar, describes an adult life reorganization of identity that provides an opportunity for reworking of earlier ego developments. His usage of this term is very similar to that of Mahler (1975), Blos (1979), and Colarusso (1990) in their descriptions of the first, second, and the third individuations respectively. Major lines of development during these stages may be summed up as follows: self and object constancy during the early childhood sub-phase, the switch from parental ego-support to a wider non-familial affiliations in adolescence, and successful reworking of old conflicts through parenthood versus stagnation of development and passing conflictual issues to the following generation in the third individuation of adulthood. Akhtar conceptualizes “the resolution (mending) of splitting of self and object world that tends to result from immigration” (1995, p.1076) as an ultimate positive outcome of immigration. He states that it does not presuppose the mixing of two identities in equal proportions, but rather finding a comfort zone that would allow for progressive development of self-identity that evolves through a life span. The process of mending involves four domains of drives and affects, space, time, and social affiliation. The concept of these four domains may add important insight into the way people explore the dimensions of change in self-concept.

When describing the affective experience of an immigrant, Akhtar uses Kernberg’s (1966) theory of splitting of the self- and object representations along

libidinal and aggressive lines. The phenomenological manifestation of such splitting would be a trend to idealize one country and devalue another one. Even though some authors, such as Grinberg and Grinberg (1989), tried to establish some patterns as to which country is idealized in particular stages of immigration, in my clinical experience, as well as in the case studies of Takenomo (1989) and Werman (1977), this tendency seems to be dependent more on the circumstances of immigration, and individual defensive propensities, rather than on a particular stage of immigration. Akhtar notes that those split views are subject to frequent shifts. Besides using Kernberg's notion of object splitting, Akhtar also brings other models of development - bisexual, oedipal, separation guilt (toward the old country) – to shed light on the issue of idealization-devaluation of the country and identifications connected to it. A self-representation of himself or herself as American, Russian, or Chinese, etc, may carry more male or female attributes, being oedipally accepted or rejected unconscious self-representations. The synthesis of two self-representations is reachable, according to Akhtar, when three prerequisites are present as follows: growth needs; a certain amount of the experience of efficacy; and a positive balance of libido over aggression. Akhtar's model (1992) does not intend a detailed exploration of this process, instead he offers broad strokes of description of the ideal state as a “good-humored ambivalence” (p. 1060) that provides identity with an unusual breadth of experience.

The spatial dimension, or the movement "from near or far to optimal distance," (1992, p.1060) in parallel with Mahler's (1975) notion of optimal distance between mother and child, touches upon both the interpersonal and intrapsychic levels of the immigrant's experience. Akhtar points out that initially an immigrant may derive joy

from finding himself far from his motherland, like a practicing phase toddler might enjoy a distance from his mother for some time. I can draw an example of this phenomenon from the experience of several of my friends who immigrated by themselves in late adolescence or young adulthood years. Their account of those first steps in the US was of heightening knowledge about a great distance between them and their home cities. They derived a sense of accomplishment and pride, from being so far away and not being scared or intimidated. Even though parents were not usually mentioned as a part of the equation, their presence as objects to whom something should be “proven” was very transparent.

However, the anxiety of “having exceeded the symbiotic orbit” (Akhtar, 1995, p.1078) emerges in both the practicing toddler and the immigrant. As a consequence, an attempt to restore ego support may lead the immigrant to seek a place within a new country that would be similar to their motherland. The similarity may be represented by climate, landscape, or fellow residents. A visit to Brighton Beach should serve as convincing proof to this statement, where a large number of immigrants from Odessa – a seaside city – settled down. Considering my own experience of growing up in Kiev, my requirements of my “house – to – be” are in being no more than twenty minutes from downtown Manhattan, to be in a green quiet city area, and the house should be surrounded by a large apple garden. And the summers should be somewhat cooler. Besides living in a similar area, this too large distance from the motherland may also be bridged, according to Akhtar, by actual or fantasized visits, international phone calls, etc. All of the above can serve as transitional objects (Winnicott, 1953) to bridge the gap between a desire for closeness and the reality of physical separation.

The fluctuations of spatial dimension on an internal level manifest in two extremes in self-representations – ethnocentric withdrawal and counterphobic assimilation. (Akhtar, 1992). All in-between variants are much more common, but they do not necessarily bridge the splitting of the self and the object world. Using Erikson’s term “continuity of personal character” to denote a desirable outcome, Akhtar lists several manifestations of the relative absence of this split, all of which are important when considering the meaning of the changes in self-concept. One of them is an increased comfort with both new and old self-representations at work and at home. The other two are establishing a certain comfortable rhythm of refueling, through international calls and visits, and the increased acceptance of their children’s local identifications and loyalties.

Speaking about the time dimension, or the movement “from yesterday or tomorrow to today,” Akhtar discusses the notion of mourning that is an intrinsic part of every separation-individuation phase. He uses Freud’s (Mourning and Melancholia, 1917) concept of hypercathexis of the lost object in an attempt to explain idealization of the immigrant’s past. The fantasy of lost paradise and the fantasy of someday returning to the homeland (retirement there or even a burial are desirable options) serve as manifestations of such idealization. The only difference between these fantasies, is whether the focus is on the past or on the future. Both fantasies cause a “temporal discontinuity in the self-experience” (p. 1072), when a person discards his/her present life. The nature of these fantasies is thought to be rooted in ontogenetically earlier issues of longing for symbiotic relationship with the mother. Tanya’s narrative contains a very telling example that overtly employs the notion of lost paradise.

(Would you like to visit your town at some point?) No, not really. I don't have anybody there. [] If to visit at all, I would like to go to the little town where I was born. [] I liked it there. I was so deeply loved and loving. Everything was good and quiet; I lived like in God's bosom. [Tanya's interview, Part II]

Even though, fortunately for her, this image does not particularly overshadow the present reality for Tanya, the longing for the lost bliss and safety of her early experiences is stirred up around the topic of nostalgia and possible visits.

The initial split of the fourth dimension – social affiliation - is expressed in the tendency of a new immigrant to judge cultural and social attributes in either “mine” or “yours” terms. This split is gradually overcome by developing interests in the literature, movies, and social values of the local culture. All of the above creates a “transitional area” that, according to Winnicott's definition, bridges a gap between the familiar and unknown. Language plays an important role in this process. On the one hand, it may create a fertile soil for splitting, on the other – it provides an opportunity in a way to be ‘born’ again by developing a new self-representation and new methods of self regulation (as different languages, for example, express emotions differently) that, in its turn, will influence an ‘old’ self and give it developmental push.

### **The Role of Loss and Mourning in Parenthood and Immigration**

In the literature, there are instances when the losses that a person experiences in the process of immigration are compared to the losses to death of significant others. For the purpose of my study, I found Yaglom's (1993) analysis of mourning as immigrants from the FSU experience it, to be the most interesting. Restating Klein's ideas, as they are applicable to immigration, Yaglom points out that the loss of external object through immigration creates a threat to the existence of the internal object. In the case of losing an

external object to death, there is always a possibility of retrieving it through the identification with some positive aspects (or “good object” using Klein’s term) of the deceased. There is a major difference in mourning for one’s country because the object(s) continues its independent existence even when an individual separates from it. According to Yaglom (1993), “this makes mourning even more difficult for several reasons. Since the internal work of mourning includes dealing with fantasies of killing the objects, it gives rise to greater ambivalence in the case of mourning for the lost objects that actually stay alive. At the same time, the work of mourning comes into contradiction with the purpose of emigration, by increasing the pull back which makes adjustment more difficult.” (p. 141). The more recent situation, when immigrants from the FSU have opportunities to go back, is seen by her as delaying the work of mourning. It increases their pull back and makes their lost object seem alive and, in some sense, available. I will consider this particular issue in more detail later when analyzing the actual data of the interviews. At this point, my speculation is that fantasized and/or actual revisiting of the country of origin may serve as a means of speeding up the process of leaving, by providing an opportunity to register (become aware of) personal change in relationship to the object of separation.

In the past decade, there were particular features of immigration from the FSU to the US that, to a certain extent, made this process compatible to the step-by-step process of letting go of a child over the years. The dimension that had not been present before (approximately in the early 80’s) is the graduality of immigration for the majority of the immigrant population. This gradualism is determined by the abundance of information that not only prepares an immigrant-to-be for what he or she will face upon arrival, but

also allows a person to try on new roles both in pretence and in actuality. Many people have a chance to visit the US several times before making a final decision to immigrate (Struzcovskaya, 2001).

Another dimension is the opportunity to visit home to which Yaglom (1993) refers as a complicating factor. In contrast to the immigration wave of the late seventies-early eighties, people who immigrated to the US or Israel, since the early nineties do tend to visit at least once during the first six years of immigration. (Lomsky-Feder, & Rappoport, 2000). This change is conditioned by at least two factors: one is a different political regime that does not ban former citizens from visiting; another reason, is a more peaceful emigration experience, when governmental institutions do not impose such major obstacles for individuals who decided to emigrate; as before, those who left, were not even able to think about coming back, after escaping what they considered to be a prison. “This shitty country stole at least fifteen years of my life by not letting me go. Even if it were (the FSU) a paradise now, I wouldn’t even think about going there. To what end, to see my prison and my guards?” That was my relative’s response to my innocent but tactless question about her reasons for not visiting the FSU. So by gaining “visitation rights,” my fellow immigrants and I also gained an opportunity for a more gradual process of letting go. In a paradoxical way, I think that the process of immigration with concurrent visits might be similar to the opportunity for parents to have more children. Even though there is a reliving of the experience of the primary unity in Benedek’s terms, which in fantasy could be ever-lasting, the parenting style of letting go still continues to develop. A stalemate that, according to Yaglom, is bound to happen if the lost object stays alive, or in place, seems not to happen in these scenarios.

One more dimension in which the letting go of parenting and of immigration from the FSU have important similarities, is the decision-making process and the relative voluntariness and predictability of the process. Usually some steps of decision-making precede the transition into parenthood. Even in the situations where the child is unplanned and unwanted, there is still a decision about aborting or keeping the baby. In the initial transition into parenthood, in addition to the joy of having children, there is usually some awareness of a sacrifice (of time, independence, etc.), which is easily predictable. The child's increasing independence is a predictable event as well.

In terms of the current stream of immigrants from the FSU, the overwhelming majority consists of people who immigrate because of economic and professional reasons. (Struzcovskaya, 2001) The circumstances of their immigration presuppose a relatively voluntary decision-making process, which includes considering some other options and having at least rudimentary knowledge about American reality. I will make special effort to exclude people with a history of a physically or emotionally violent emigration, where they had to flee from political repressions, war situations, or other immediate dangers to themselves or their families. Of course, in both instances of immigration and parenthood, a large part of the process is conditioned by unconscious strivings and fantasies, which again pinpoints important similarities in these areas.

Since moving from one location to another involves loss – loss of a country, loss of friends, and loss of previous identity – all dislocation experiences may be examined in terms of the immigrant's ability to mourn and/or resist the mourning process. Similarly, the reality of individuating children challenges a parent with the necessity to face the growing distance that elicits the sense of loss, in Benedek's terms, of "primary unity" and

symbiosis with their children and, by identification, with their parents. In addition, in both immigration and parenthood, the process of letting go implies relinquishing, not only external objects, but also a habitual set of roles and internal self-representations. Therefore, leaving or relinquishing crucial aspects of these objects can provoke a reaction of mourning. In order to understand better the specifics of letting go processes in both instances, it is necessary to review general knowledge about mourning. I've selected certain theories that cast light on the mourning process, with the implications for self-concept formation, one of the key components of this study.

It is customary, when talking about Freud and mourning, to refer to *Mourning and Melancholia* (1915/1955) where he states that in healthy mourning the libido that was withdrawn from the lost object is transferred to a new one; in melancholia it is withdrawn into the ego and gives rise to secondary narcissism. However, I find another starting point more helpful when conceptualizing the meanings of mourning. In *The Ego and The Id*, Freud describes the “character of the ego” as a product of “past object-choices” and a “precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes.” According to him, mourning is a process that serves the goal of decathecting the energy from the lost object and transferring it to new goals. Therefore, the character of the ego is formed through multiple encounters with different levels of mourning, - keeping in mind that Freud defines loss in a much broader way than just loss by death. He defines loss as an absence of an object that previously was strongly cathected. Identity formation, as one of the domains of ego functioning, undergoes constant development as a result of multiple separations, and identifications

with old and new objects. By adopting this view, it is possible to conceptualize the process of mourning as an important device of individual growth.

Many theorists agree that in the nature of healthy mourning is gradual withdrawal of energy or emotional concerns from the lost object and preparation for forming a relationship with a new object. However, the concepts on how this change occurs depend on how the dynamic of object relations is conceptualized. Even though Bowlby (1961) states that his theory of mourning, unlike Freud's, was not concerned with the question of identification with the lost object and identity formation per se, it appears to be a logical inference from Freud's view on the key role of mourning in the development of the ego. Bowlby offers an important insight into self-concept formation by providing a definition of mourning that may be used to highlight the restructuring of self-concept at certain stages of mourning. He writes: "Mourning will be used to denote the psychological processes that are set in motion by the loss of a loved object and that commonly lead to the relinquishing of the object. Although a common outcome of mourning is relinquishment of the object, this is not always so." (p. 318, 61) He further expands his thoughts about the instances where the relinquishing did not occur by delineating healthy and pathological mourning. In the latter, the retention of the object takes place, which comes as an acute contradiction to the reality where the object is no longer present. The course of mourning that makes it possible for an individual to relate to a new object in a satisfactory way is commonly accepted as healthy. Bowlby's contribution is even more important because he was among the first ones who laid the theoretical ground for understanding the adaptive possibilities of mourning.

Bowlby describes mourning as a three-stage process. Briefly, during the first stage an individual is concentrated on the original object; in the second stage disillusionment and disorganization follow the failed attempts to retrieve the original object; and in the third stage, the whole system becomes reorganized on the basis of connections to the original object, as well as to a new object. Bowlby explains each stage from a perspective of both ontogenetic and filogenetic biological theory. In the first stage, the individual experiences an urge to recover the lost object. He describes several expressions of this urge, specifically weeping, anger, and accusations. The author relates the roots of the common response of weeping to the infant's cry for his mother, which bears a very important biological function of bringing his mother back. What Freud denoted to be a distinctive feature between normal mourning and melancholia – a presence of conflictual feelings toward the lost object, Bowlby postulates to be a common occurrence in both, normal and pathological mourning.

The anger appears to have two main objectives: anger against those believed to have been responsible for the loss, and anger against those who seem to impede reunion. Although there may be many other individuals who seem to the bereaved to be guilty in one or another respect, it is plain that the lost object is almost always sensed as being in some degree responsible also. This means that anger directed against the lost loved object is practically inevitable and universal. (1960, p.321)

The anger reaction and hostility evident after irretrievable losses is easier to understand, according to Bowlby, in the light of the multiple temporal losses that people have to face. These reactions help to retrieve the object and ensure that the separation will not be unduly repeated. An increase in aggressive behavior in young children separated from their mother figure seems to be such a well-documented fact (Rado, 1928; Robertson, 1953; Tanner & Inhelder, 1956) that it didn't elicit any subsequent research.

We all know that after dealing with a weeping and kicking eighteen-month old at the door-step in a torturous attempt to leave, we all are bound to have second thoughts whether it was really necessary to leave. Sometimes simple anticipation of these scenes and the accompanying guilt is enough to ensure that the parents will stay put as much as possible.

In terms of another common reaction in the first stage of the mourning process – accusation and reproaches aimed at the lost object, the self, and the third party, Bowlby (1961) stated that they are all part of the effort to undo the loss and to maintain intact the expected reunion. Except for these reactions being the signs that the loss has not been accepted yet, he does not explicate any further on their possible origin. I find Bowlby's theory not contradictory, but rather complementary to Klein's (1940) view in this regard. She postulates that grief and longing do not occur alone, because a certain degree of paranoid fear, accusations, and guilt at having been responsible for the object's destruction are always present as residue of an earlier developmental stage of object relation. By the mechanisms of projection and externalization, an individual tends to transfer those feelings from himself/herself onto the lost object, thus experiencing aggressive impulses toward it.

Grinberg & Grinberg (1989) in their work on immigration and exile, concentrated mostly on clinical populations, which allowed them to conclude that the nature of psychic pain expressed by immigrants can be linked to pain of loss, but is much more intense, being on the margin between physical and mental pain. The authors describe the character of this pain as being substantially more primitive than pains of the depressive position. Therefore, regardless of the phase attained in the individual development, they

interpret the emotional state that the immigrant goes through, in Kleinian terms, as belonging to full-fledged paranoid-schizoid position and not just the residue of it. By doing my study based on the accounts of a non-clinical population, I hope to achieve an understanding whether the same extreme experience holds true in their narratives.

I want to present two examples from Tanya's interview where, I think, aggressive accusation and reproaches toward the lost object and the third party played a crucial role. She had a certain calm rhythm to her narrative when she was describing her life in Odessa, her circle of interests, her daily activities. When she described a point of time at which it became possible to implement the long-made decision to emigrate (after she received a refugee status and, being still in Ukraine, was trying to sell her belongings), the pace and tone of her narrative changed drastically. She started generalizing about "the country" (the FSU), her own hateful feelings about "the system", etc. The story she had to tell me about her friends at that period of time was a story of a betrayal for money. Tanya and her husband had developed a strong friendship with a family that was compatible with them in many ways. They had children of almost the same age; they had similar interests, and ended up spending a lot of time together. That family helped Tanya through the hassles of the emigration process. When it was time to leave the country, she gave this family a power of attorney over her house because she didn't have enough time to sell it. Unfortunately, they misused it, doubling the price and postponing the sale. The feelings that Tanya expressed toward this family were as follows:

Love and hate...I think I do know now what an abandoned wife may feel – hatred, yes, but also love and tenderness that used to be there and that are still there. .... I feel such shame for them [for this family]. [P.27]

Even though the conflict with that family was clearly a very negatively loaded experience for Tanya, it did not happen right before their departure. Their relationship started several years before the immigration and Tanya found out about what had happened with the house six months after her family came to the US. However, Tanya had chosen to talk about this event when describing herself at the period of time when the decision to emigrate was finalized. At another point in her narrative, Tanya also stated that after it became possible for them to immigrate to the US, her relationships with people had not changed, but her attitude toward her country in general crystallized as very negative, “A country that uses its own citizens in experiments doesn’t elicit respect.” [Tanya’s interview, P.26] By expressing her attitude to the country in these terms, and by choosing that particular example of betrayal when talking about her circle of friends at the time of departure, she was able to objectify her anger and resentment that prevailed over other feelings toward the FSU.

It was not possible to make conclusions based on one interview, but I will have to be attentive in other interviews listening for the theme of a changed attitude toward one’s country after the decision to emigrate was finalized. One may hypothesize that it is this decision and not the actual physical emigration that serves as the hallmark in some profound sense and that signifies the start of a mourning process for the lost object – one’s country of origin. In such a case, the anger and bitterness toward the country or “the system” might be interpreted within the framework of Bowlby’s theory, as the manifestations of phase one of the mourning process with its urge to recover the lost object by the means of aggression, accusations and reproaches, which, in Tanya’s case, were aimed at the lost object. With that said, it is possible to draw an interesting parallel

between her angry feelings about “the system” that became aggravated as soon as she decided to leave, and her saying about the prospective of becoming a mother-in-law:

My daughter says to me, “Mom, I know you don’t like him already regardless of who he is.” And she is somewhat right, I don’t. [P. 16]

Tanya was half joking, but, as they say, every joke is only partly a joke. Tanya is projecting into the future her likely response to her daughter’s qualitatively new separation. Consciously, she is ready to reject and be angry with the third party, using Bowlby’s terminology, the third party being her daughter’s prospective partner, the one who is going to take her away from Tanya. It would be too big of a stretch to say that Tanya already experienced the reaction of mourning about her daughter’s separation, but she was definitely very apprehensive and ready to accuse. In both instances of prospective loss, she used aggression as a defense against the loosening of libidinal ties.

In the second stage of the mourning process, the efforts to recover the lost object diminish and disorganization, accompanied by pain and despair, follow. Bowlby conceptualizes the depressive phase of mourning as a subjective experience of disorganization when a significant object or a goal is no longer subjectively perceived as retrievable. In his theory, the term “object loss” may be pertinent to the actual objects, the goal, or the realm of feelings that are being replaced by different feelings. Probably, it is common for people to be very reluctant and anxious when facing sadness and disorganization. It was especially unbearable for Tanya because disorganization implies complete lack of control, control being the main mechanism of her interactions with the world. The evidence of this stage in Tanya’s narrative was very scattered and discrete in essence. In her parenting experience, there were several moments of distress clustered

around transition into latency and puberty, and a transitional period of late adolescence – early adulthood. All those periods in the literature, but also in one’s own experience are routinely associated with physical/emotional/cognitive maturation and separation leaps on a child’s part. According to Tanya, not one of those periods was characterized by any changes in her relationship with her daughter, or any changes, except for physical, in the daughter herself. However, all kinds of aversive events in her daughter’s environment have caused both of them significant distress. Usually, Tanya was able to cope and to shield her daughter from these events. She helped her out with homework during the elementary school turmoil that was “caused by a harsh teacher;” she served as her daughter’s only confidante when the girl was scapegoated at school in the seventh grade. The only incident when she failed to provide help, happened when the girl had to make several important decisions during their first year in the US. Tanya herself lacked needed information so she could not make those decisions for her daughter. During the periods of time when a parent, facing his/her child’s increasing separation and independency, has to relinquish some control, the parent may experience a period of certain reorganization of parental functions. It was not the case in Tanya’s relationship with her daughter. During those transitional periods, she externalized confusion and aggression and dealt with them on that external level - thus internally never acknowledging any kind of separation. This strategy served for Tanya as a defense against the looming threat of internal separation and change.

Except for the home of her childhood, which she lost well before the immigration, Tanya had never admitted longing for the country left behind. However, she mentioned two periods of feeling “not well,” being transiently mildly depressed. Both

times happened when she found herself in-between jobs, with her future uncertain for a short period of time. One can speculate that when she was “at a loss,” not sure what to do, and her time was less structured, she unwillingly got in touch with a subdued sense of a bigger loss. I am not stating that her behavior in Ukraine used to be organized around her country as an object, but rather around a combination of roles that fit comfortably. When they were shaken and questioned in the process of immigration, the lack of structure during certain periods of time became the additional stressor that challenged her defenses to the point when some of the depressive feelings became apparent to Tanya. Throughout the interview, she mentioned several times how emotional she became when she first came to New York. She mentioned being moved to tears by the sight of a religious Jew walking down the street with his numerous children all dressed in their celebratory outfits. She could not stop tears rolling down her cheeks when she heard Yiddish, the language of her roots. Of course, both incidents pose a multiplicity of meaning, but I want to touch the shallowest layer, by noticing Tanya’s emotional state at that period of time. It was, according to her, a very uncharacteristic response for her - to cry on the spot, which could be a sign of her emotional lability – one of the symptoms of a mild depressive state.

According to several authors (Lindemann, 1944; Bowlby, 1960), when hopes for reunion fade, behavior usually ceases to be focused on the lost object. From my own experience, I remember that after the first few days upon arrival, I stopped looking at the planes in the sky, wishing I were boarding one of them for my flight home. However, my energy level was low, I felt numb and disconnected from myself. Even though my functioning was not particularly affected, I had experienced at least several symptoms of

a depressive state during that period of time. Analysis of this part of my experience and also of relevant aspects of Tanya's narrative, demonstrated that by paying close attention to the indications of emotional oscillation throughout immigration years, it is possible to discover information that participants omit or fail to report for a number of reasons, like differences in categorization or its being unavailable to conscious analysis.

During the third stage of mourning, according to Bowlby, reorganization takes place by accepting the object loss and connecting to a new object. This stage, being the longest one, lends itself best for the detailed structural and functional analysis of the reorganization process. Bowlby's work offers valuable clinical examples of the flow in this stage, and substantially fewer theoretical explanations on how it becomes possible to let go of an old object and attach oneself to a new one. Keeping in mind Bowlby's idea of the stages of mourning that can serve as one of the helpful basic frameworks for this study; I want to briefly go back to the explanation of the process of detachment from a lost object that Freud provides in his *Mourning and Melancholia* (S. E. 1917):

Each single one of the memories and situation of expectance which demonstrate the libido's attachments to the lost object no longer exist; and the ego is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished. [P. 255]

This general comment by Freud is pertinent to the cases where the object has not been "abolished" all together, but rather became, figuratively speaking, less available for attachment and control. In both instances of the letting go process, during immigration and parenthood, it is possible to observe oscillations between idealization and devaluation of aspects of new and old objects. For example, in my patients' narratives, the motives of enjoying their increased freedom, when the children became more independent, and

hating that very freedom, often went together. Literature on immigration is full of examples of idealizing and devaluing the old and new country at different moments by the same individuals. These extreme oscillations might be the representations of split off aspects of objects when, as it happens in the earlier stage of development, a person is not able to hold on to a whole picture of bad and good properties of an object at the same time. Therefore, the task of the third reorganizing stage can be formulated as the rejoining of the separated self and object representations. This work would entail revisiting both positive and negative aspects of the object. The revisiting and revising of the negative aspects may bring deeper acceptance of them. (Klein, 1940)

Tanya paid a toll for going through such a convoluted reorganization stage, or, in other words, of prematurely attaching herself to a new object – new career and new social environment. The restructuring of her psychic system was entirely lacking. She was able to adjust on an external level to a new set of circumstances, but this adjustment was not accompanied by internal changes that would allow her to stay connected to both the new and the old country. Throughout the interview, she denied being an outsider, an exile. Her extensive use of negation around this issue might be a reflection of an inner conflict about feeling as an outsider and, at the same time, spending a lot of psychic energy in an attempt to deny those feelings.

In my interpretation, every new developmental stage of a child can be conceptualized as a new object of attachment for a parent in the parent-child relationship. It entails relinquishing crucial aspects of relationships that were tied to the old ways of parent-child system regulation, tied to the previous level of dependency and separation,

often to the belonging to a younger age group for a parent. Tanya reported on being exuberantly happy with her current relationship with her daughter.

It seems we became closer than ever. I am happy about our current relationship. We have never been distant, but now she tells me everything. Who looks at her, how to go about this boy or that girl. She shares everything with me. [P.14]

In her narrative, there were no indications of internal changes in the mother-daughter relationship. Tanya had adjusted to her daughter's physical maturation and she never acknowledged any other kind of maturation, so she didn't have to let go of anything, to adjust to internal changes in her daughter. The passage of time brought only more closeness, according to Tanya, in their relationship. This pattern is very similar to the above-described way of attaching to a new country, with no regrets and no internal adjustment. The difference is that in the mother-daughter relationship, Tanya has such a tremendous power in shaping the new object, her grown-up daughter, in accordance with her need for control

Even though this particular stage of reorganization was by-passed by the first participant of this study, I expect that in other individuals with less extensive use of externalization and compartmentalization, this stage will be more pronounced. The task of reunification of positive and negative aspects of self and object has to influence the way an individual perceives and conceptualizes himself/herself and the world around him. That leads us to examine the transformation of the self-concept of an individual. But before plunging into this subject, let me present a quote by Hoffman (1989), describing her sense of fully immersing herself into a new reality, and, at the same time, feeling the presence of duality and connectedness to an old object, which, I think, represents the results of the third reorganizing stage of mourning.

I am here, feeling the currents of conflict and warmth, but from that other point in the triangle, this is just one arbitrary version of reality. People could behave in a different manner; I could look different; I could be having entirely different conversations. Not any specific conversations; the other place in my mind no longer has any particularity. It's just awareness that there is another place – another point at the base of the triangle, which renders this place relative, which locates me within that relativity itself. [P.212]

### **The Notion of Self-Concept and Its Role in the Letting Go Process**

I utilize the term self-concept as a constellation of explicit and implicit beliefs that an individual holds about himself/herself that create a sense of uniqueness and continuity of himself as a person. I arrived at this concept on the basis of my clinical work with immigrants and non-immigrants who found themselves struggling with a variety of major transitions, e.g., career changes, socio-economic status changes, and other transitional experiences. Many of them reflected on alterations in how they came to think about themselves. The majority of these individuals reported either explicit difficulties in experiencing themselves as “the same person,” or, at least, a heightening sense that they had to make a special effort “to hold on to themselves,” “to stay true to themselves.” The sheer number of times that these phrases came up in sessions indicated that I was dealing with a phenomenon that needed to be better understood as part of what happens in these transitions. This phenomenon appears to be, at least partially, conscious and accessible even for descriptive theorizing in some individuals. In others, it becomes obvious only when threatened by conflict of choice: “I knew it was not my path;” “if I had gone there, I would betray myself and everything that I believe in;” “I felt as if I wasn't myself when I worked there. When I used to come home after my day, I had to remind myself of my own name.” All of the above are quotes from the patients who, in retrospect, clearly

talked about similar phenomena – their emotional awareness and intellectual understanding of themselves as unique individuals who change and, at the same time, have a sense of their own continuity – namely, their self-concepts were in the focus of attention.

If ambitious enough, I could laurel myself with the title of the “inventor of the wheel” and make an attempt at demonstrating how the term self-concept is different from self-identification, self-perception, self-awareness, or many other similar terms from psychoanalytical and object relation literature. The less energy consuming way would be to acknowledge right upfront that self-concept is almost the same thing as all of the above. The rationale to use this term, and not one of the previously mentioned, was that, by stating that self-concept is *almost* the same, I can grant myself with a relative freedom to gather under one roof what can be relevant and meaningful for this research from many rich, well-grounded and, at times contradictory, theories on self awareness, self perception, and others.

Another reason I employ the term self-concept is because of its semantic relevance to the phenomenon under consideration. This term implicates the act of conceptualizing that entails the active role of the individual embedded in it. This reflects the side of the experience that can be best described as conscious efforts on the part of an individual to come to terms with how it feels and what it means to be himself, especially in times of transition. This is one aspect of the phenomenon that I was referring to earlier and had the privilege of observing in my patients.

The cornerstone of this study is the question of inner relationships between the letting go process and possible transformation of self-concept. An obvious way of

approaching this question would be by studying the changes in how a person conceptualizes himself in different stages of parenthood and immigration. Therefore, we need to find a path through which those changes, if they occur, can be registered. The knowledge accumulated about the origin of the related concepts comes in handy.

James (1890, 1979) was the first one to use the term self-concept in a relatively close to contemporary connotation. Emphasizing the introspective origin of this phenomenon, he theorized about the dual nature of it. It combines “I,” or the actual experience; and “Me,” or the objectified content of the experience. The “I,” according to James, is whole and indivisible in contrast to “Me,” which has at least three “faces,” physical, social, and spiritual. The physical element of self-concept contains a sense about one’s physical being and material belongings. The social element is rooted understanding oneself in relation to others and their acknowledgment of the individual. The spiritual part of the self-concept is responsible for introspection into one’s own emotions and spiritual strivings and, in this capacity, it has the easiest access to the everyday life of “I.” In James’s theorizing about multi-component self-concept, the later sociological debate (Dosinsky, 1932) has originated about the existence of a general self-concept versus the variety of functional self-concepts that are formed as a result of a “multitude of individual’s roles”(P.237). This debate poses a relevant question for this study, which concerns the nature of change in the process of letting go. The question can be formulated as follows: whether the change occurs in self-concept as in unified entity where each aspect influences the general picture or change occurs in the set of separate identifications (self-concepts). In the set of separate self-concept one of them can be

changed with no consequences for other identifications. As one can notice, I substituted the term self-concept for the term identifications. I think that the situation when an individual conceptualizes himself/herself as a multitude of separate roles comprises a developmentally earlier stage, which serves as a precursor of self-concept formation.

The other heated debate that had come from the field of sociology and later influenced the understanding and interpretations of self-concept in psychology was concentrated on the source, the origin of self-concept. This issue is related to the question of formation and transformation of self-concept, which gains primary importance for this study when I will have enough data to start looking into these processes on a more theoretical level. The debate was represented by the symbolic interactionism approach that viewed interactions with society represented by cultural pressures, rules, and regulations, as the main shaping forces for the self-concept. This approach employed terms such as “looking –glass self” and “generalized others” (Cooley, 1912 in Gordon, & Gergen, 1968; Mead, 1934) to define the influence that others have on the formation of individual self-concept. One judges himself/herself according to the standards that he perceives others utilize while evaluating him. These standards are created on the basis of shared meaning, or symbolic representations of actual interactions between an individual and his referential groups. This view on the sources of self-concept is represented by the object relations’ school in psychology and by the systemic school.

The other “side” of the debate concentrates on the individual’s perceptions of his/her unique reality. The only reality that exists is perceived reality because there is no absolute reality and no absolute meaning, only meaning that the individual ascribes to events and experiences. The phenomenological approach assigns the major role in the

self-concept formation to the “describing,” (Rogers, 1951) or phenomenological, field of an individual and his/hers perceptions of the environment and of himself. The client-centered approach is grounded in this theoretical viewpoint, which places the individualistic perceptions and his/her hierarchy of values and beliefs as a keystone of individual development and therapeutic interventions.

I decided to present this debate briefly, because I think that the question of the source, or origin, of self-concept has major influence on the way the transformation of the self-concept through the letting go process is understood. Both approaches, phenomenological and symbolic interactionism, seem to be not mutually exclusive but rather complementary, if considered in light of psychological mechanisms in individual development. The growing number of authors (Jacobson, 1964; Kernberg, 1966; Kohut, 1971; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975) agrees on the role that the other, a significant adult, plays in the formation of child’s sense of self through mirroring, ascribing meaning, and evaluating processes. There are no doubts that all these processes are shaped by the societal and cultural standards, by the shared meaning of the particular historical, and even geographical, reality. Through these mechanisms, the environment plays a crucial role in the beginning stages of self-concept formation. Later on, self-concept should acquire a certain stability, which does not preclude it from further development. However, the rate of change is not as drastic as, for instance, during the first and the second individuations (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975; Blos, 1979). It would be logical to assume that, at later points of development, the pre-existing self-concept and earlier acquired perceptions of reality plays a more important role in further transformations of the self-concept, thus confirming the notion of the phenomenological

approach. It would be interesting to look into the source of change, and not only the presence of change, when considering the influence of the letting go process on one's self-concept.

In order to consider how the self-concept is changed, one has to think about the ways these changes become accessible to an individual. Self-perception is a necessary component in forming self-concept and registering changes in it. In order to form a concept about himself/herself, a person has to be able to perceive himself/herself as a separate object with certain qualities. The ontogenetic question will be touched upon a little later. Here, I find to be very relevant, Fenichel's (1937; 1945) comments about the origin of self-perception. According to him, the image of self originates from two sources: first, from a direct awareness of our inner experiences, of sensations, of emotional and thought processes, of activities; and, second, from indirect self perception and introspection – from the perception of your bodily and mental self as an object. For the reason that our capacity for detachment and reflective awareness of our own self is limited, the act of self-cognition can contribute only to some limited extent to our conception of the self. That leads us to two theoretical conclusions. The first conclusion is that self-representation will never be strictly conceptual. The second conclusion concerns the ways of monitoring the transformation of self-concept by not only relying on self-reports, but also searching for the accounts of the situations in which the changes of self-concept will become apparent as it is, without introspection on the part of the participant. The situations that I am referring to involve changes in the relationships to others, in the circle of friends, hobbies, likes-dislikes, changes in how the participant describes important objects, social and moral attitudes. For example, the only indication

of some mild transformations in Tanya's self-concept was her account of change in her circle of friends. Her defensive style of externalization and denial of loss by the means of exercising direct control provides an explanation for unconsciously choosing this particular way of acknowledging the change. To acknowledge the change in the external reality, over which she can exercise a certain amount of control, does not pose a threat to her identity.

In order to sensitize ourselves to possible indications of self-concept transformation, we have to touch upon another process, namely the formation of self-concept, because similar mechanisms can be at work in both instances. Erikson's theory offers an important insight into the role of identification in self-concept formation. Erikson (1956) noted, "Identity formation begins when and where the usefulness of identification ends" (p.113). Seemingly Erikson here talks about a different phenomenon – identity formation. However, his definition of identity is so broad, that it includes components that are the main characteristics of self-concept. All the following quotes are taken from one page of his work where he defines identity: it includes "a conscious sense of individual identity" and "an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character;" it provides us with "a criterion for the silent doing of ego synthesis." (p.103, 1956). From these quotes, it can be safely concluded that Erikson's notes on the beginning of identity formation may be extrapolated on the formation of self-concept. The sense of identity has its beginnings in the first mental images of the body (Greenacre, 1958) and proceeds with the development of progressively more differentiated mental representations of the self and others. Internalization of a stable representation of the need-satisfying object, or libidinal object constancy, is the crucial aspect of this process.

(Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975) After achieving object constancy, symbolic and continuous mental representations of self and others become possible. Erikson (1956) proposes a notion that at some point of ontogenesis, multiple and elective identifications allow for the formation of a relatively stable self-concept. When this concept is formed, the ongoing need for identifications with new objects ceases substantially.

The issue of identity was thoroughly examined by Kernberg (1966). In his theoretical considerations about “identification systems,” he brings together the school of ego-psychology and the school of object relations, by connecting the mechanisms of internalization of object relations to the process of ego development. He suggests the existence of the three levels of internalization of object relations – introjection, identification, and ego identity. Introjection is based mainly on perception and memory. Identification is primarily based on the ability to recognize the socially assigned roles of the object of identification. Identification triggers ego transformations that may manifest on a behavioral level in the interpersonal realm. At last, ego identity, according to Kernberg, becomes possible only on the basis of a complicated synthesis of ego functions. The following three aspects are the characteristics of this stage: (1) the presence of a sense of continuity of the self; (2) a sense of consistency between the concept of the self and the external representational world; (3) a sense of “confirmation” of one’s identity derived from interactions with the environment.

It is a well-known inference from developmental studies on physical and psychological development, that at times of rapid change there is often a substantial regression present as well. If we try to employ the same notion in the case of rapid transformation of self-concept, we can predict a somewhat heightening identification

trend in transitional times that seem to be otherwise relatively absent in high-functioning adults. There are several indications of that phenomenon in Tanya's narrative, in the parts where she referred to a period of time within a year after immigration. She described a family that helped her family out during that first year. She listed a variety of favors and generous contributions that they were able to provide to Tanya's family.

He [the husband in that family] literally went out of his way to help out my husband. O, God. How helpful they were! How considerate!..... They didn't just help us with work. Many people could do this. They helped us in the most incredible way. They helped us to get on our feet, to believe in ourselves. They taught us HOW to live here. [P.25]

However, Tanya's description is lacking even the minimal analysis that is characteristic for her when she describes other people in her life. She is actively trying, but utterly unable to talk about their individual features, their motives, and the possibility of some mutual interests that brought together this family and her family over the years. She appears to have "taken in" this family as a unit, without examination, which is often the case in identification.

If we are to assume that not only a person, but also an image, a representation of a role, might become an object of identification, then Tanya's rapid "becoming a mother," as soon as she saw her daughter on the second day after the labor, can be understood as an example of it. Employing Kernberg's (1966) notion of levels of identification systems, we can safely assume that the initial transition into motherhood happened for Tanya through identification, which, with the passage of time and multiple confirmations of that role, was transformed into ego identity. Further analysis of the multiplicity of instances is needed in order to come to any definite conclusion, but there is a possibility that in Tanya's example, especially in the immigration process, we encounter a regression to

more primary levels of identification that may be characteristic for transitional periods when the self-concept undergoes rapid transformation. These identifications do not necessarily have to be positive. In fact, the sheer presence of this process could be taken as an indication of some transition in the self-concept.

The incidents of negative identification in young parents are quite common where they use someone else's examples as a push off basis in an attempt to conduct themselves differently with their children. The promise of "I will not do, teach, or say to my kids as it was done, said, or taught to me," is a frequent theme in the conversations of young parents or parents-to-be. This negative identification appears to represent an important trend. Recalling her first year of immigration, Tanya reflected in her narrative on how she encountered several different groups of immigrants from FSU, one of which she called "smart asses." Those individuals knew best how to milk the welfare system and were eager to advise Tanya on the same strategy. Tanya took special pride in listing the criteria in which her family differs from that category of people. Both positive and negative identifications served Tanya well in her path to finding her identity as a new immigrant.

Our theorizing about changes in self-concept would not be sufficient for the subject of this research without paying attention to two seemingly opposite trends in the self-concept experience – the notions of change and preservation. From my own experience of going through the first stages of parenthood, being the all-consumed mother of an infant and later a toddler, I remember my frantic and sporadic efforts to "check" against something external to me, whether I was still the same: still liked the same rock-groups, still liked to lie face down on the grass breathing in the smell of earth; or whether I was still liked by my friends. At the same time, together with the desire to

nurture and maintain the sense that I was still myself, I welcomed the change no less vigorously. I loved my growing into the role of mother. I was in the process of constant discovery, including discovery of my own qualities and abilities: the amounts of love and patience I would never suspect I had, the strength to defend and stand up for myself and for my baby when facing a myriad of supposedly well-meaning but intrusive professionals. I experienced the world as shrinking and expanding at the same time. Shrinking because I was so focused on my child, and expanding for the same reason – in addition to mine, I also acquired his perspective, and you can see the world very differently being 3ft tall.

I believe that this example can be summarized by two major trends – I was in a rapid transition into sets of roles and expectations, and during that transition, I experienced the extreme fluidity of my self-concept. This fluidity brought about anxiety and strivings to stay the same, for the sake of my own sanity. Similar notions of change versus stability were prominent in the narratives of my patients, as well as friends, who went through the experience of immigration. Therefore, in the literature I was looking for theoretical accounts of these notions. Interestingly enough, Erikson, in his works on identity, does not mention these phenomena, except for the initial “unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character.” (p. 102, 1956) However, Jacobson (1964) regards Erikson’s introduction of the term “identity formation” as one with merit, if not limited only to the ego and its synthesis forces. She develops this term further, describing identity formation as a process that gives grounds to the ability to preserve the whole psychic organization even in light of its growing structuralization and differentiation as a unique but coherent entity which “has direction and contiguity at any stage of human

development.” (p.132) The normality is defined here as a normal subjective feeling of coherent self at any stage of development, thus preserving the stability without stagnating the kernel of change that is there by Jacobson’s definition.

### Concluding Remarks

In order to sharpen up several nuances of the offered preliminary description of the letting go process in the instances of parenthood and immigration, I want to compare my view on this issue to a concept of culture shock that was offered by Garza-Guerrero (1974). He postulates that in the process of immigration, a culture shock occurs and serves as a driving force for the creation of a new identity of an immigrant. This process is divided into three stages. In the uncomplicated case, during the first stage (the cultural encounter), the multiple losses of the love objects bring about a sense of discontinuity of one’s identity. Therefore, the process of mourning for the lost aspects of culture brings about reactivation in fantasy of past good object relations. By the mechanisms of identification with the past good object, an individual attempts to recover what was lost. If the mourning was successfully accomplished, then, according to Garza-Guerrero, it prepares an individual for a “discriminating internalization of selective identifications from the new culture” (1974, p. 24), which is the task for the second stage. In the third stage, he presumes the presence of consolidated new object relations that are united into a new ego identity. Ego identity in Kernberg’s (1966) definition is an integrated concept of the self and objects in relationship with the self.

My hopes for the outcome of this study are in clarifying the preliminary thoughts on the letting go process. So far, all the above-mentioned theoretical and experiential

sources helped me to articulate several aspects of this process, some of which were easier to formulate as they diverge from Garza-Guerrero's concept of culture shock.

- The letting go process comprises two major components that go alongside and not consequently in each of the stages of this process. Relinquishing an object or some aspects of the object of attachment is the one component of this process. The second aspect of this process is the acquisition of new sets of objects, including human and non-human environments, as well as social roles and professional identifications.
- It could be said that changes in the self-concept allow the letting go process to take place. The mourning process is the method of working through the pain that necessarily accompanies the relinquishing of the objects, as well as the aspects of one's own self-concept.
- There are significant similarities that are imbedded in the letting go process across different instances in an individual. These similarities are based on the particularities of internalized object relations and defensive mechanisms.

## **Summary of the Literature Review**

The literature on immigration offers important insights into the stages of immigration and the factors that contribute to its outcome. The majority of the authors who have written on this topic agree that immigration presupposes a shift between the “average expectable environment” (in Hartman’s term) of one country and of that in another country. The literature supports the notion that the nuances of the immigrant’s progress through this shift influence greatly his or her prognosis for adjustment in a new country. What is missing in the literature is the phenomenological description of the process that allows an immigrant to relinquish important aspects of himself/herself that were connected to an old country, and take in a set of new experiences. By concentrating on a detailed account of the process of letting go, this study will attempt to fill this gap.

Mourning and identification changes are imbedded in letting go. By studying the literature of mourning as well as on identity formation, it is possible to distinguish certain principles according to which both of these processes may take different routes. These principles concern mostly mechanisms of defenses and the nuances of internalized object relations. Therefore, I have reason to assume that the process of letting go might have similar characteristics within the same individual across different instances of relinquishing the object.

I have chosen parenthood in its aspect of letting go of individuating and separating children, across the time span from the child’s latency to early childhood, as another instance of the letting go process for the following two reasons. (1). There are important similarities in relinquishing one’s important aspects of identity during immigration and during growing child individuation. These similarities lie in the

predictability of certain aspects of experience, relatively gradual and voluntarily engagement in them, and the apparent possibility not to let go, but rather to hold on to an object. (2). This aspect of parenthood has been studied in its phenomenological description, mostly from a child's perspective, or, if from a parent's perspective, then it was concentrated on a relatively brief period of time, like a specific stage in the child's development. One of the purposes of this study is to develop a detailed description of the letting go process from a parental point of view.

## Tanya's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes "I have already arrived..."

### Leitmotiv

I became more needed. (By whom?) For my ménage. We all became more essential to each other. Immigration shook us up. It united us. This is the fulfillment of our long-standing wish. [P.40]

(What comes to mind when you think about immigration?) Difficult. Important. Necessary. This is in general. My own immigration I consider to be successfully completed. It was not that difficult for us. We came not to an empty spot; my husband's parents were waiting for us here. [] It was a way out from the situation, a way out from that life. When my parents and my brother eventually arrived... At that moment the immigration was completed for me. [] I put a period there. I thanked God. My husband, who is not a wordy person, he finishes each of his wine speeches with "God bless America". It means a lot to him. [P.21]

(What age of your child did you like the most?) Now. It suits me that she is so open with me now. She now is dating boys. She tells me everything in detail. She hasn't reached the point of having sex with them. ... We became closer than we were before. I am very happy with our relationship, as it has developed now. [P. 1]

(If someone asks you who you are?) [I am] The Mother!... This is the most important for me – my parents, my child. They depend on me the most. And I – on them. Their well-being is my happiness. [P.31]

As I demonstrated in the above examples, the main theme for Tanya, throughout the interview, was her desire to be needed by her family. The adjective 'extended' is not a suitable term here, because her immediate family and both sets of parents and siblings seem to be a close-knit unit in Tanya's description. Tanya feels the happiest when they need her, and a prerequisite for this is to be geographically close to all of them. As for her daughter, even though in Tanya's narrative there were no indications of a period of time when she felt distanced from her daughter, now she is even more open and ready to share her experience with Tanya. The background for this theme is the immigration that allowed for all of this to happen.

## Transitions

### Transition into parenthood

(Decision to have children) Naturally. I was of a good age. We didn't use any birth control, we expected a child. Naturally... When I found out that I was pregnant, it was like – 'o.k'. (What kind of 'o.k' was it, happy 'o.k', calm 'o.k'?) Nothing. I was busy graduating from college. I started working. Can't say that I was sitting there and just waiting. I was busy with my life. [P.3]

Motherhood began for me in a hospital when I first saw my child. I gave birth in my mom's town in a very small and cozy hospital. I came to the hospital in the evening. I saw newborn babies in the room. I didn't like them. They had red skin and huge heads. I didn't have any motherly feeling toward them. But when in the morning, I came into the same room and saw mine among those 4-5 babies!... All of them didn't look so disgusting to me any longer. But mine was the most beautiful... And slept all the time! [Smiling][P.2]

This transition into parenthood has two distinctive patterns. First, even though the pregnancy was a planned one, Tanya denied any influence it possibly had on her life, emphasizing the natural course of events. Keeping this in mind, the contrast with the second trend – the immediacy of her acceptance of a new role - is even more striking. As soon as the evidence, namely the baby, was there, Tanya “was born” as a mother. She never expressed any doubts in her ability to mother or any ambiguous feelings about motherhood.

### Early childhood

(How was she as a little girl?) She was not calm. Probably because she was spoiled. Everybody was indulging her. Do you want this, do you want that? And she had ... Maybe there is a special name for this syndrome in psychology, but we've called it 'wanty-don't wanty.' 'Do you want to go for a walk?' 'Wanty.' It is winter, and as soon as everybody got dressed 'Don't wanty.' Everybody got undressed – 'Wanty.' This syndrome was there in different situations. Even now when she gets into one of her moods, I am asking, “what, again ‘Wanty-don't wanty?’” (What did you do with that?) Oi, I didn't do the American way, I wasn't acting according to the American standards. I would usually give her a good slap on the behind. She would cry, she would yell, but then it was my way. [P.4]

Here Tanya is referring to the most prominent example in the whole interview of her daughter's individuation. However, the meaning that Tanya ascribes to it is not a step in her child's development, but rather her lack of ability to make a decision and stick to it. In Tanya's theorizing, this aspect of the daughter's personality which she described several times, originated in an external source - the excessive indulgence that numerous adults created for this child.

#### Latency transition: Elementary school

(Did she go to your school?) Yes. Everybody loved that baby in the school. Everybody knew her. The children knew her because she would often sit during my classes. [] She literally went just across the road from her old pre-school. [P.6]

(Were you able to feel the difference?) Yes. It became very difficult. She got into a class...I put her into the class that was considered to be the best. But the teacher was walking on parents' heads to build her career. The requirements were tremendous. The children were not able to comply. [] She is a slow reader, but so what? I am a slow reader, too. But they had this special "shame board," and her name was there. [] But as soon as she went into a normal teacher's class, everything was fine, I forgot about her homework altogether. [Pp.6, 7]

In those quotes, Tanya describes an ambivalent nature on this transition. On the one hand, if it were up to her, she wouldn't notice any transition at all, at that period of time – neither in the daughter's intellectual or emotional world, nor in their relationship. However, there was an external negative object – the too demanding teacher that in a way "forced" this transition upon both the mother and the daughter. The externalization of a "bad" separating force brings about a sense that nothing has changed internally in their relationship, and as a possibility, Tanya has not changed herself, has not aged. This speculation seems to be relevant here, because during the very first minute of the first interview, when asked, "what comes to mind when you think about a child's growing independence," her answer was "my aging" (Part I, p. 1), indicating that these two phenomena – aging and separation – were inseparable in her mind.

The following quotes illustrate a strong tendency in Tanya to compete with her daughter, a tendency that is prominent in their present relationship, but was first mentioned in the period of early latency, possibly signifying a shift in their relationship.

(Describe yourself at that time when she first went to school.) I liked music. I put her in the musical school. [] But she didn't turned out to be a musician. She couldn't do it. I play quite artfully, easily. I improvise easily. I like it. [P. 10]

Igor [husband] was carrying her terrible little drawings in his wallet. She has two left hands. Her drawings have always been awful. When I could – I drew for her [school assignments]. But at the same time, Igor carried her drawings in his wallet. I – didn't. They were ugly. She is probably... I can draw a little bit. [] She felt her whole life as: 'I will never be able to draw like you, to play [piano] like you.' I was probably trampling her, bearing her down with my authority. [P.12]

Colaruso (1990), in his concept of parenthood as a third individuation, writes on the basis of his observations, that aggression is stimulated in the parent by the child's competitiveness. However, as a result of the absence of a real threat, it is tempered by the amusement at the child's attempts to compete. Gradually, a series of these experiences should produce an alteration of the parents' competitive fantasies and experiences around the same issues with their own parents. By the means of this alteration, a parent develops a new level of ego maturity. In Tanya's case, it is not possible to establish "who started first" the competitive trend. It probably will be safe to assume that, even if Tanya was reacting to her daughter's competitiveness, her reaction was so powerful, in its magnitude and duration, that it shaped their relationship. The emergence of the competitive trend, particularly at that period of time, could have been triggered by a rapid development in her daughter's intellectual and emotional capabilities. Developmentally new levels could serve as a sign of "no longer a baby" stage of her daughter's life, thus threatening Tanya's absolute control in that relationship. To compare the intellectual or artistic abilities of a six-year old to those of an adult is a very effective way to undermine those new achievements. This, according to Tanya's last revelation in the quote, seems to be particularly the case here.

The only direct mentioning of a change happening in the child, was Tanya's recollection of noticing her daughter's physical development when she was 7-8 years old.

I remember a moment when at once.... she was still little, I don't remember, maybe in the first or second grade. Suddenly I saw hair on her *vagina*. I am saying, o, my, she is still so little. I still kiss her everywhere, and suddenly it's here already. I was so frightened, I was so surprised. You know, all those feelings were mixed up in me, and I told [this to] my husband. He said "Well, that's good." I was saying – she is still so little; and he was saying – that's good! [Laughing] (What was different about that?) This feeling that she is not mine. She is grown up. Nature takes its toll. And that's not what I want. I always want to play with her. [P.11]

The contrast between Tanya's inability to reflect on the emotional or intellectual development of her daughter, and her seemingly good grasp on this physical change, is striking. She acknowledges ambiguous feelings about the change itself, openly talks about her own helplessness, and uses humor as a higher order defense.

#### First stage of immigration: Decision-making

It was Chernobyl already. There was only one thought - to leave. That was the main thought. First we left for Siberia, thank God, we didn't get there. [] The man that we were supposed to exchange\* our apartment with found out about the state of matters in our area and refused to move. We never concealed the level of radiation there, but we never announced that this was the reason as to why we were leaving.

We tried to find other exchanges but it didn't work out. And I am glad it didn't because our relatives that invited us to Siberia soon left for Israel, and the place itself [in Siberia] is not heavenly at all. [P.9]

It was officially announced that the radiation situation was not good and it was necessary to evacuate the children. A group of children from my school was sent to Odessa for the whole semester. I went with them and took Rimma with me. We stayed there, and Igor came a little later, he was managing a large construction project in Odessa. [] We had a difficult... On the one hand, we lived in a not to say bohemian atmosphere, but a lot of well-known or just well-educated intelligent people came there for vacation and we were able to socialize with them. On the other hand...we lived in a room where we had only one Queen size bed for all three of us to sleep on, and a tiny table. We lasted like this for several years. [P.10]

The decision-making process was curtailed to the minimum because of what seems to be a powerful external threat – the radiation factor had to be taken very

seriously, especially for its effect on the children's health. However, it was not possible to define Tanya's situation as a fleeting one, because it took her four years to move to another city. She didn't just take off to any place when Chernobyl happened in 1986, but waited for an official announcement in 1990 about the radiological threat, even though it was common knowledge long before that. She evacuated using an opportunity arranged officially for them. Therefore, Tanya's almost complete lack of recollection of any losses imbedded in the decision-making process, or the move itself, is remarkable, and cannot be accounted for only by the extremity of the external circumstances. Her extended family became further away; she left her circle of friends and her workplace. But the only regrets she expressed, albeit somewhat vaguely, were about her apartment, because this move forced her to live for many years in a very tiny room with no accommodations.

I used to have a very good friend who currently lives in New Jersey. We used to be very close; our children were of similar age. We had common interests, common students, we liked and disliked the same colleagues. In 1989, she left for the US. It was a huge era for me because then I left for Odessa. It was ten years for me here, for her- there. She wrote one letter to me, and I answered it. We stopped writing to each other, I even took offence that she stopped writing to me. I learned through others about her life there. But I still love her. We call each other so seldom. We have different lives. When we rarely get together, we reminisce about our old times in our town twenty years ago, but I am fed up to my teeth with that. I don't want to gossip about the same colleagues again and again. I had another phase of my life after that with different colleagues, friends, and interests. . It is upsetting for me. I love her; her voice is music to my ears. Unfortunately, now we don't have anything to talk about. The desire to see each other every day is not there. [P.8]

This is the only quote in which Tanya was able to reflect on a significant change that was brought about by the immigration experience. Even though she again focused on somewhat external signs of change, like different friends or colleagues, the meaning of her inability to reconnect with her old friend indicated a deeper change. One could speculate that she and her friend's lines of development diverged, thus creating an inability and/ or lack of desire to develop a new set of shared experiences or, at least, make an attempt to "update" each other on what's been substantial in their lives. Tanya reflected on how painful this loss was for her, but she talked only about the lack of shared experiences, blaming the geographical distance for that. By focusing only on this external aspect, without trying to reconnect, she was able to successfully avoid facing a more

substantial loss – possible personality changes in herself and her friend. As in her relationships with her daughter, Tanya readily accepts and adjusts to obvious external changes, without acknowledging the implications of these changes for personal development of either of them.

For ten years we were immigrating somewhere [] From Odessa we were prepared to move to Israel, because all the paths to the US were closed for the lack of direct relatives. We were studying Hebrew, but I kept asking myself a question: why study Hebrew if I already knew English? This is the same kind of question that my husband kept asking when we just arrived here: why study something new if for twenty years he's been doing something else? [] Eventually when my husband's uncle had immigrated [to the US], they said: do not be too quick with Israel, wait. His letters describing what was here were great, but we didn't need his letters. We were ready and willing long before those letters arrived. [P.23]

The above quote is well explained by Tanya's expectations and fantasies about the US.

What I expected from my future in the US? That I would be taking care of someone else's kids. I wouldn't even dream about the profession that I am studying now. I wanted to leave to insure a peaceful future. We didn't know yet... The image of America as a peaceful, bellyful, content country. To insure the child's future, the future of my grandchildren, so that my grandchildren could express gratitude toward me. Even those who won't know me: "That's because of that grandmother that we got here." [P.26]

Her dream about America held a sharp contrast between a paradise type country and her own expected future of working a non-professional job and serving as a springboard for generations to come. Both extremes represent a common trend in immigrant defensive mechanisms. The easily predictable misery of those first months can gain a sense of purpose if seen in the light of plowing for the following generation. The idealization of the new country works as an antidote to the sense of loss about the old country, which served Tanya well in that capacity, but not before some preliminary work was done.

(How did you relate to your country of origin after it became possible to come to the US?) I had good relationships with people who were surrounding me. I had a very negative attitude to the country [USSR] in general. A country that exploits its own citizens in experiments doesn't elicit respect. [P.26]

The lack of elaboration, even when probed, tells us that the contempt for the country of origin was Tanya's way to negate the feelings of loss, rather than being a real suffered-through moral stance. Even though she talks about "good relationships with people," this part of her narrative contains a story about a family that was very close to them, but betrayed them for money. The described events lasted for several years, but she dated her story as "her circle of friends at the moment before departure". It seems that the level of perceived and remembered negativity around these moments was high in both the human and non-human environment. The tendency to keep it high even before the actual move, which possibly makes it easier to separate, provides us with the basis for speculating about the beginning stages of the letting go process, as occurring before the physical immigration.

#### Transition into puberty

(How was she developing? Your relationship with her at that period of time?) She was a good student. We always had a good relationship. Nothing stands out. There were no conflicts. The conflicts started not with me, but in her class when she went to the seventh grade in a new school. [] It was a very prestigious English school, and of course, when I started to work there, I transferred her there as well. The majority of her class were children of "new Russians" [people with recently and half-legally acquired large amounts of money]. The atmosphere was very cruel there; the children were cruel and rude toward her. [] (Why, do you think, she was a scapegoat?) She was different in a way. She didn't go on dates, she wasn't kissing boys, and she wasn't discussing male penises. [] She was normal. I think her physical and intellectual development was normal. Maybe she is somewhat slow in her sexual development. The things that were of interest for schoolchildren – she is interested in them now. [p.11]

Once again, as with the transition into latency, the external negative circumstances call the tune in Tanya's account of her daughter's pubertal transition. Nothing had changed in their relationship, according to her; unlike others, they didn't have conflicts at that, often times, turbulent period of time. Nothing stands out in Tanya's memory, no developmental advances, and no interpersonal frictions, just others who interfered and brought pain. Even the very first phrase in her response is about how well

her daughter was studying, which is the external appraisal of development. One can only speculate, with high probability though, that the pain described stemmed mostly not from an external source, but rather was representative of an internal threat of possible separation. Also, the daughter's physical maturation happened relatively early; therefore her late psychosexual maturation, depicted by Tanya, could be a sign of imposed psychological restrictions and fear of separation.

### Second stage of immigration: Parents' immigration; the actual move

I do not remember our departure as well as I remember my parents-in-law's departure. They were so tiny, pitiful, run-down, and profoundly unhappy. [] That moment when they were already there and we were here, on the other side of the divide. I was so scared for them. They were standing on the escalator. I was crying so hard afterwards. Our departure was scary, too, but not to that extent. I was packing... [P.40]

As it often happens when one identifies with the object that he/she takes care of, this object is perceived as a part of oneself. Quite literally, with the departure of in-laws, Tanya suffered not only the feelings of loss from separation from close relatives, but also she was facing the fear of the unknown for them. Metaphorically speaking, she cut off parts of herself and sent them ahead of her in order to be able to join them later on. The move was especially difficult because she wasn't able to exercise her usual way of control – taking care of them there.

(Describe your first days in New York.) Everything was the way I expected it to be. Except for the dirt, it was a lot dirtier than I expected. [] The very first day? Religious Jews made me cry. [] I was crossing the street and I saw a handsome rabbi with *peyos*. He had many children in holiday outfits. I started to cry. Somehow I thought that everybody would be pointing their fingers at them. I had this feeling, I wanted to shield them. But nobody was pointing at them, but rather at me, because I was crying. [Smiling] It was a feeling of homecoming. [P.24]

Tanya paints a very poignant picture from which feelings of sorrow and joy emanate freely as in childhood, without later acquired intellectualization and censorship. Even though she doesn't see any parallels on a religious level, there is a keen similarity between the feeling that she describes in the above-mentioned quote, and the way she talks about her early memories in her parental family. She contrasted a "generic nostalgia for white birch," which she is entirely lacking, to her yearning for the atmosphere of her

early childhood home, where she was “enveloped in warmth and love.” She wanted to protect this Jewish family by shielding them from the non-welcoming and mocking world. She herself might have felt protected by her family and vulnerable at the same time because she belonged to Jewish culture. As it turned out to be, *she* needed the protection and not this family. People on the street were paying more attention to her and not to them. It was she who didn’t belong.

We started to work right away, both my husband and me. We took English classes and went to work. [] There were people who helped us to get on our feet. Not just helped to find a job, because an employment specialist could do that. They helped us to believe in ourselves, to get on our feet. [] There were many puzzling moments, *income tax returns* for example. Somebody suggested something. I was never afraid to ask for an advice. Now I can advise others. It might be because I started working right away in a Russian company. All in all, our Russian Jews are good people. A social worker from that center, why should she bother to give advice to somebody who is practically waitressing tables. Not just advice, no, she insisted that I apply to the graduate school; she was calling my house at night. They accepted me at NYU, but I got scared. (Why?) Because my daughter had not been studying yet. Also around the same time, I found another job.

This quote is one among many that illustrates Tanya’s strategy of openly facing realistic difficulties and dealing with them effectively on that level. Her relatively quick professional and social adjustment is based on this ability.

When I first started working in the adult day care center, where there were people of my parents’ generation, all of them had benefits, housing, all had full bellies and were comfortable...At the same time, my parents were still there, living in the apartment with no heat. For four years no heat, no gas. We were helping them financially, but we couldn’t warm them up. So when I was working with those constantly complaining people who got everything from America, SSI, medicine... When they complain, I take them as my personal enemies.

This part of Tanya’s narrative has the highest concentration of negative affect to it. She herself doesn’t conceptualize it as a stage, nor does she connect it with any kind of emotional turmoil. However, she mentioned difficult times, being for several months in-between jobs, and while at the job, being very annoyed by a specific type of client. She herself is pretty clear about the origin of this annoyance in her jealousy of the well being of constantly complaining elderly, especially when compared to her parents’

circumstances. One can speculate that it was also the time when Tanya felt the most intensely torn between two countries as represented by the two sets of parents.

When I started my second job [as a service coordinator], it was not difficult. I figured it out quickly. By that time I was here for a year. People who lived here much longer were my clients. I was using my example to teach them, which was not right from a social worker point of view, but still. Two girls went on to do their MSW degrees. [] I also had a good time at work when I organized a group of elderly and I taught them English. They didn't add any money to my salary, but I was enjoying myself. I enjoyed preparation for the classes, and the positive feedback from the students. [P.30]

In this quote Tanya demonstrates how her preferred style of coping (control exercised by taking care) helped her through otherwise difficult times, to the extent that she didn't have to mobilize other strategies to reach some sense of stability and belonging both socially and professionally.

#### Late adolescent – young adulthood transition

We had this difficult stage with her when we just came here, she was sixteen-seventeen. She didn't know what to do, where to go to study. She really needed our advice. She was crying, desperately asking what to do. [] Our well-meaning relatives were giving contradictory advice whether she should go to high school or to college. She graduated from the high school in Odessa. Nobody was able to help her, she suffered through this. [] She failed the language proficiency exam the first time around. Significantly failed. I remember that night; I had to sleep with her... Tragedy, no other word would describe it for her... [P.14]

The transition in the last year of high school is one of the most difficult and abrupt in the life of a middle-class adolescent in the FSU. At this point, an individual has to decide on his/her professional career, because, by choosing a specific college, one chooses an occupation. This transition gained another meaning for Tanya's daughter, who was deprived of her independent trend all her life. Tanya herself was disoriented in a new society with an abundance of information and lack of experience. For the first time, she failed to serve as a protective wall between her daughter and the outside world. Tanya was able to put her daughter's failure on the test in perspective, but it was significantly more difficult for Rimma herself. One can speculate, on the basis of this example, that Tanya's controlling style of parenting was provoked by a "constitutional weakness,

deficiency, or retarded maturation of the infantile ego, which may compel the child to lean heavily on the mother's ego for need gratification, support and control." (Olden, 1958, p. 512) We do not have an assured way to confirm or reject the hypothesis that, using Olden's terms, Rimma is the child who experiences the more prolonged and more powerful need for her parents' support and guidance, on the basis of her constitutional propensity to dependency. However, Tanya's need for control in every area comes across so strongly, that it seems to have the internal power to override any kind of natural propensity that her daughter may have.

Tanya's daughter as a young adult: "We became closer than ever before."

She is all grown up now and she gets upset that I am bearing down on her with my authority. She doesn't go shopping without me, but when I tell her to try something on, she goes, and "I am not trying this on because you picked this. I want to pick myself." I am often right in my advice. But because it was my decision and not hers, she resists me. (What happens then?) I get upset with her and I retreat to my room to read. She goes nuts. In the morning everything is fine. She has an easy temperament. [P.17]

When she decided to go to law school, I did not change her decision. It is a good decision. Even though I think that social work is good, too. I do not insist, I hold back. LSAT is a difficult exam. "Rimma! You should take Kaplan classes!" "No, I will do it myself." Myself, myself... She did worse on the exam than she could. [] Now she is registering for the Kaplan classes. She did what I said, but first she declared herself, her opinion. [P.14]

These two quotes can serve as a vivid present-time example of how Tanya is not prepared in any sense to release her control over her daughter. Even though she appeared to be able to reflect in retrospect on how the way she exercised her authority brought up indecision and the fear of inadequacy in her daughter, only a safe distance of ten-fifteen years allows her to think about her authoritative tendency as excessively strong. For someone who uses externalization so extensively, the absence of her direct influence on the life of her adult daughter in the form of forceful guidance may signify her own non-existence. To paraphrase a famous saying, she does what I say, therefore I exist.

(When you think about the child's separation, her growing up...?) It seems we became closer than ever. I am happy about our current relationship. We have never been distant, but now she tells me everything. Who looks

at her, how to go about this boy or that girl. She shares everything with me. I would not say that she has that many friends. Electronic, virtual friends, I do not consider them as friends...[P.14]

Tanya has voiced this thought several times throughout the interview. She also concluded the whole section on her current relationship with her daughter, by repeating herself, almost word by word, about how she feels the most satisfied with their relationship now, when her daughter is so close to her. Unfortunately, mature closeness by the choice of two independent human beings came through nowhere in the presented material. The glimpses of Rimma's independent strivings were seen, albeit through her mother's eyes, when she was very little in her "wanty-don't wanty" period. A distant echo of what meant to be an adolescent effort to individuate is seen now, in her early twenties, in Rimma's faint attempts to pick her own closing or to choose self-preparation for the test. By far, Tanya was able to acknowledge a change in her daughter only in the area where she couldn't deny it – in the area of physical maturation. In her refusal to acknowledge and accept her daughter's emotional or intellectual individuation, Tanya retains complete control over her.

Third stage of immigration: "My immigration is successfully completed."

Right now, half of the week I work as a service coordinator, and half of the week as a clinician. About the clinical part – it is new, therefore a little scary. Also who knows when the results will be. It is easier with concrete services. I get money for a client – hooray! [] The clinical work is not aversive to me. I associate it a lot with teaching. I was bringing up children. It is the same thing. [P.37]

Tanya doesn't resent changes when they are real, palpable, and needed to serve her again very real material needs. She picked a career area that was affordable in terms of money and time, and it was close enough, in her interpretation, to teaching, so she could utilize her existing skills and inclinations to take care by teaching. Because she seems to perceive both the therapist and the teacher's roles as a solidified entity, she doesn't miss any of the nuances of being a teacher in her being a therapist. None of it, at least on a surface level, brought about a deeper personality change. On a deeper level, the whole composition of her current professional functioning was structured by her resentment and avoidance of any internal changes.

I do not experience nostalgic feelings. To visit... I would like to visit my grandmother's grave [who died when Tanya was in the US], but it is not even where I used to live. We have separate lives from my friends. (When did you feel that for the first time?) Very recently. The principal of the school where I used to work came to NY to visit. I respected her a lot; I respected her in a way I respect my current boss now, someone superior to me. [] This time, while strolling at night in Manhattan, we had a long conversation. We were equal in that conversation. And I didn't have this feeling toward her as toward a superior. We are just different, because our lives are different. Financially different. Being a school principal, she has to work as a guide in the summer, and she makes twice as much money, by doing that, as she has as her principal's salary. [P.32]

When Tanya reflects on what seems to be an internal change, as it was in the quote about a woman who used to be her close friend and now they don't have anything to talk about, she still tends to talk about external attributes. As in the example with her friend, the lack of shared experience prevents them from regaining their friendship. In the above quote, Tanya is no longer a subordinate to her former principal, therefore she feels as an equal, and not because the immigration years changed something within her. She safely took her feelings of respect toward her old boss and transferred them to her current boss. There was an externally unfortunate change – her grandmother had died without her. So she feels a need to visit. Tanya was clearly very attached to her; spoke fondly about the way the grandmother used to help her with her daughter. However, she never mentioned missing her grandmother as a person, never mentioned a void that could be a result of this loss. But to acknowledge the longing would mean to acknowledge the loss, the loss that Tanya defends against so consistently.

I do not miss anything [from my previous life]. I spent almost forty years of life there. It was a good life, a kind life. [] I spent all my life with one husband. So I haven't had the trauma of an abandoned woman. I am not crossing out my years there; I am not saying they were bad. I have a relative from Texas; she visits us to get a gulp of Russian culture. We have it here, we have the Russian channel, we have Russian surroundings more than American. [] I haven't as they say, "*Cut the cord.*" I am Russian all the same, I will never become American. But I like it here in America. [P. 38]

This quote echoes the theme of being thankful to America, the theme of "God bless America" with which she had started the interview on immigration. This theme brings to a logical conclusion our exploration of Tanya's parenthood and immigration

journeys. She feels that America, as an external force, brought her family together, letting her fulfill her dream of being more needed by her family. Also, the immigration allowed her to prolong her youth, by giving her the opportunity to be a student, to do something new. She could not find this opportunity for herself back in Ukraine because there was no objectified need for that. She doesn't miss anything in her old country, because she was able to transfer her set of roles and identifications to the new environment with no considerable sacrifice. In a way, she herself was transferred without being transformed; her self-concept remained unchanged, because any kind of transformation would imply loss. Letting go and working through a mourning process were something she was not able to handle. She has all the attributes of culture for her use in New York City. By the way of simplification, one could say that she has what she needs, and nothing exists outside of her in a metaphorical sense. If something had existed, she then would be in danger of losing it, the threat that she is not able to handle. Unfortunately, this style of letting go, or rather holding back at any expense, brought about a very specific type of relationship with her daughter. In order to retain complete control over her daughter, Tanya had to deprive the girl in her need to be a separate being. Tanya enjoys their current relationship very much, because, without all the responsibilities of caring for an infant, she has complete access and control in relation to her.

## Chapter II: Methodology

### Participants

Eight to twelve individuals, both males and females, will be recruited and invited to participate in this study. The participants' age range will be within 35 to 50. Participants must be parents of one or more children of latency to early adulthood age-range. No grandparents will be included in this study. All participants would have emigrated from the Eastern European region of the former USSR to the US in their early to middle adulthood. They should have lived in the US for at least four years prior to the interview.

As it is clear from the above, in order to define the scope of the participants, I have to take into account several issues. The literature on parenting pays significantly more attention to mothers, when it comes to the question about children's separation-individuation, especially at the earlier stages. However, nobody would question the presence of attachment and loss in both sexes, therefore the phenomenological description of the letting go process would be incomplete without examining this aspect of parenting and immigration in both males and females. One of the goals of this study is to examine the changes in self-concept that cannot be explained solely in terms of major transitional periods in personal development. Setting the limit of the age of participants to middle adulthood years (Levinson, 1978) will help to avoid the extreme fluidity of self-concept at the time of the second individuation of adolescence. (Blos, 1979) The upper age limit is determined by the specifics of the immigration experience of older generation. This population has significant qualitative differences in terms of their goals and expectations in the adjustment process. For these people the immigration

itself is being largely mediated through other generations (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). The issue of mid-life crisis that may influence substantially both the experience of parenthood and immigration will be discussed in data analysis, if relevant.

By limiting the age of the participants' children from latency to early adulthood transition, I am trying to ensure a sufficient number of years in the child's individuation. In addition, the upper limit of early adulthood transition (around 20 years of age, according to Levinson, 1978) for children, may provide us with parental accounts of several stages of their children's separation-individuation. The exclusion of grandparents from this study was informed by an anticipated significant change/shift that occurs in parent-child relationships with the arrival of the next generation (Ostrovsky, 1993), the nuances of which are beyond the scope of this study.

Most literature on stages of immigration (Westermeyer, Vang & Neider, 1983; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989) labels the first stage of immigration as a "shock" and gives this stage a time frame from several months to five years, three-four years being an average estimation. A very powerful phenomenological description of a shift from the first stage to the next one was given by Hoffman (1989) in her account of a new immigrant experience:

*...After the initial culture shock and culture thrill wear off, after one gets used to the strangeness and the excitement of new buildings and clothes and music and ethnic diversity and the extremes of wealth and poverty and the foibles of democratic election and the difficulties of getting a job; after the immigrant's dendrites stop standing on end from the vividness of first impressions, comes this other, more elusive strangeness – the strangeness of glimpsing internal landscapes that are arranged in different formations as well. (P.265)*

The next stage, after the initial novelty wears off, allows some distance from the immediacy of the first experiences. In my personal narrative, I was able to begin taking

stock of what had changed in me, what I had lost and missed the most. It had happened only after I gained some initial stability in my situation, which took me about two-three years. As an example from a participant's narrative, Tanya stated that after two years in the US and after changing her job to the one that was more similar to what she used to do at home, she began contacting people left in Ukraine more intensely. Having considered these factors, I have chosen participants who have lived in the US for at least four years. This should increase the likelihood that they will be able to reflect meaningfully on the process of letting go. In terms of the upper time limit in the US, this study targets participants who emigrated as young adults or older, in order for their self-concept to take a relatively stable form before and not during the immigration. This study aims to develop a conceptual framework of the process of letting go through the lens of changes in self-concept that cannot be accounted for only by transitional periods in individual development.

In terms of the participants' immigration experience, the notion of their origin from the Eastern part of the Former Soviet Union was discussed above in the light of striving for a certain cultural and experiential homogeneity of the sample. I want to mention again screening out individuals whose experience might be classified as political exile in actuality, and not only by the letter of the immigration law. (See the Prescreening Form – Appendix A)

The amount of data limits the number of participants to eight-twelve in order to insure proper attention to the data analysis. The participants will be recruited through my professional and personal connections. At a later point, the snowball technique (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) may be employed, should the necessity arise. Their role will

be introduced to the participants as informants about particularities of immigration and parenthood experiences. This format of the research requires individuals who have potential to be reflective and vocal about their internal experience. This may influence the educational profile of the participants, skewing it in the direction of more years of formal education than is known to be an average in this population.

### *Psychobiographical Method*

The body of professional psychological and psychoanalytic literature on parenthood and separation concentrates mostly on the theoretical foundation of this phenomenon. The available research has two general characteristics. It pays attention almost exclusively to the “product” of parenthood, namely the children; in particular, it focuses on some crucial but relatively short time periods, like the rapprochement stage or puberty years. The methods that lend themselves best for achieving these purposes are observation of the child’s behaviors, both symbolic and non-symbolic. The internal experience of the parent has not been adequately explored. Both qualitative and quantitative research on immigration, offers important insights about adaptation and assimilation processes to the new country, including language acquisition, job search, and others. Naturally, methods commonly employed in this research are questionnaires and structured interviews that focus on actual facts and “graspable” achievements. Therefore, in both areas, the under-represented component is the first-hand account of individuals who are actively engaged in the letting go process.

This study is an attempt to fill the gap in our knowledge of the phenomenology of the internal changes in self-understanding and self-conceptualizing that occur during

our journey through space and time when growing together with our children or when leaving and arriving in the process of immigration. The character of the inquiry has to be exploratory in order to map out the nature and the descriptive components of the phenomena under consideration. The exploratory character of such research was described by Mintzberg (1983):

Call this research exploratory ... peripheral vision, poking around in relevant places, a good dose of creativity - that is what makes good research, and always has, in all fields. (P. 109)

This study will examine the period of time ranging from seven to about twenty years of the participants' lives. In order to get a grasp of the characteristics of the transitions that happen over such a long period of time (and transitions themselves being so vast and pervasive), we have to employ a method that allows for the passage of events under consideration and for the context of life experience to be in the foreground simultaneously. The psychobiographical narrative approach allows both – the richness of the emotional experience and the complicated tapestry of reality – to be seen, heard, and taken into account. Freud in his “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood” (1910) provides the theoretical foundation for this method. He writes about a dynamic interplay between internal forces and external powers that becomes apparent when this method is used in an attempt to make sense out of a person's life. According to him, the ultimate goal of this method is to demonstrate the connection between a person's external experiences and his reactions. In recent years, this method of psychological inquiry has gained an increased popularity (Ely, 1997; Grove, 1997; McAdams, 1995) among the researchers who choose to concentrate on questions that require an inquiry that is multi-levelled.

### *Instruments*

For the purpose of this study, a semi-structured in-depth interview will be used to explore participants' experience of immigration and parenthood. I developed an outline of the interview using several sources. Theoretical and empirical literature provided a rationale for addressing specific stages and causal links in the framework of both transitions. My own narrative served as an experiential sketch that offered specific micro themes that were not touched upon in the literature, because of its generalized character. Nevertheless, these micro themes were helpful in developing questions, targeting information that may potentially provide us with new routes of studying these phenomena.

In my clinical practice, I often have to concentrate on severe conflicts around the variety of transitional issues in my patients' life narratives. The level of tension and pain frequently does not allow a patient to respond productively to direct inquiry into causal connections or meaningful self-observations. Therefore, focusing instead on a detailed description of relevant experiences, can often enrich and/or substitute for the expressions of beliefs and theorizing on the patient's part. Even though I intend to interview a non-clinical population, there are reasons to believe that the same strategy may be very useful when dealing with any individual who has difficulties in being self-reflective when some conflict area is touched upon in the interview.

The interview consists of two parts: participants' reflections on their children's developing autonomy, and their own immigration. Each part will start by asking the participants to free-associate to some key words of immigration and childhood

individuation, e.g. what comes to mind when you think about your child becoming more independent. This technique is known in the literature (White, 1998) to provide a researcher with a good scope of the hierarchy of major themes in a succinct form. The first large segment within each part will be devoted to participants' current family constellation and present concerns and feelings about immigration experiences. These "present-time" questions have a goal of not only getting a scope of relevant issues, but also of establishing a rapport, by connecting on a level of present interests and concerns. Patton (1990) suggests that the researcher begin with questions that address the present, then go back to ask questions about the past, and only after building such a basis for trust do the future-oriented questions become possible. Future-oriented questions involve considerable speculation and are typically less reliable than questions about the present or past.

The next set of questions will concentrate on the decision-making process that surrounds becoming a parent and immigrating to another country. The inquiry may bring up themes of mixed feelings about this process, as well as the themes of initiative and responsibility. Also, a detailed description of the emotional states during these periods of time, and of the prevailing family atmosphere, may reveal the quality of the emotional underpinnings of those first steps.

The main body of questions will be devoted to sub-transitions during immigration and parenthood. The thematic areas for exploration in this segment in the parenting part will include: the quality of relationships with children, the multifaceted individuation process of the children and parental reactions to it, the meanings ascribed to children's problematic behaviors, and the extended family involvement during each of the stages.

In the immigration part, the transitional periods will be explored in terms of the level of language and cultural comfort, involvement with fellow immigrants and “native” Americans, the changing view of their adaptation process and success within it. Other areas to be explored will include: professional and educational goals at different periods of time, the relationships with America and the FSU, as highlighted for example by reactions to the recent terrorism events in both countries, and real or fantasized visits to the country of origin and their reactions to them. Each example, and others to be explored, offers a possible window into issues of identity and identification.

A recurrent set of questions about changes in participants’ self-concept will be presented on an as-needed basis, in the form of questions about changes in the circle of friends, interests, likes-dislikes, goals, and beliefs about themselves and others. These questions will be used more as probes, if the above-mentioned topics do not come up on their own.

Participants’ projections into the future will be explored with questions about the possible state of matters in five years in the participant’s relationships with their children and in terms of their expectations of immigration and of themselves as immigrants.

### *Procedures*

In the preliminary screening, I will inform the prospective participants that the purpose of this study is to explore the experience of their children becoming independent individuals. Further, I will inform them that the study will also focus on different aspects of their immigration experience and their understanding of it. After the

screening, they will sign an informed consent form that will be provided in English and/or Russian. Two interviews of 1.5 to 2 hours duration will be conducted with each participant. The set of questions will appear in Appendix D. The language of the interview will depend on the participants' level of comfort, and they will be assured that they should feel free to use both languages as needed. After each interview, I will also take notes describing my observations, concerning the participant's behavior, nonverbal communications, and my own emotional reactions.

Each interview will be recorded on an audiotape and will remain confidential. The tapes will be transcribed and translated by me, when needed, into English. Subjects will each be identified by an identification number on the tapes. They will be asked to provide their name, address, and demographic information on a separate sheet of paper. This information will be kept on a separate list, which will be stored in a different location from the tapes.

### Data Analysis

Patton (1990) writes about the challenges of the task of having to analyze qualitative data:

...to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communication the essence of what the data reveal. [P.371]

In order to extract needed information, I will need to do analysis of the verbal production on several levels. The non-semantic aspects of language, such as the density of information, the use of figurative expressions, the pace of narrative, the choice of language (Russian, English, or Ukrainian) all contain important information. Repetition,

negation, omission, and others, offer useful insights concerning emotional underpinnings of the narrative that sometimes confirm and at times contradict its content.

On the content level, the analysis will concentrate on the recurrent themes and passages that are related, not necessarily factually, but by the virtue of meaning that the participants ascribe to them. I will begin to process this information by microanalysis as a first form of coding when notes are made on the margins. (Straus, 1987) In the next level of coding, I will group several thematic variations into one general theme. The last step of data analysis is thematic comparison and contrast among different participants. This particular stage requires all the information to be already collected. These stages of data analysis are supported by the literature that recommends analyzing data as it becomes available, rather than waiting until the end of all the interviews. (Strauss, 1987; Miles and Huberman 1994; Maxwell, 1996)

Between the first and the second part of the interview, I will listen to the tapes and note the area that seems to be the most obscure and in need of further exploration. I will also use research group discussion to gain additional insights into the major themes and conflicts in the material. My research group as a one-step removed tool has proven to be the most resourceful place when it comes to the analysis of the specific themes from Tanya's narrative, e.g. her propensity to use every separation as a chance to increase closeness and dependency.

## **Chapter III: Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **Inga's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Inga is a thirty-seven years old female who looks her stated age. She came to the US from the FSU six years ago with her ten-year old son Igor, and a husband, Sergey. She came pregnant, and in two months, she gave birth to her daughter, Sasha, who is currently graduated from kindergarten. Inga's son is fifteen, and he is a sophomore in a classical ballet class, in a specialized art school. Inga is almost done with her graduate studies in social work. She also works full time at a mental health agency that serves individual with special needs. Sergey works as a technician performing, according to Inga, low-profile, undemanding, and repetitive tasks.

Inga spent a substantial amount of time talking about the family she came from, specifically about her mother. Inga and her older sister (they are seven years apart) as children, both witnessed and sometimes were victims of physical abuse that was inflicted by her father on all three of them. Her mother was the main target of his violent outbursts. When Inga was seven years old, her mother divorced her father and became the head of a single-parent household, which was not only extremely difficult financially, but also socially stigmatizing. At that time, single mothers were looked down on in the small Ukrainian town where Inga came from. Inga recalled reflecting as a child on some of those difficulties, but not taking them as a serious tragedy. According to her, she had a happy childhood, especially enjoying a close relationship with her mother, after her sister moved out to go to college in Moscow.

After graduating from high school, Inga went to Moscow to college. Inga expressed her appreciation for her mother allowing her to do so, even though the mother was possibly quite lonely without her; and there was a general trend in the society, at that time, to study as close geographically to the nuclear family as possible. Inga recalled her college years as the most liberated and joyful period of her life, when she was trying new ways of living. According to her, she had the most diversified crowd of friends and lovers possible. She also enjoyed her field of study, which was education of children with special needs. During her second year of college, she met her husband-to-be who was finishing his education in military academy. In spite of all his advances, she did not feel

particularly attracted to him. However, after several intense and unsuccessful personal experiences, Inga, in her own words, chose security and intimacy over attraction, and decided to marry Sergey. She agreed to move to Kazakhstan, where his military job destination was.

Inga defined living in Kazakhstan as the most difficult period of her life. She finished her education there, and in a year, gave birth to her son. Soon after that, she started to work as a teacher/social worker in a boarding school for children with special physical needs. She described her work as the only enjoyable component of her everyday routine. Her husband's work schedule ended up to be extensively demanding; therefore Inga was left to her own devices to manage work, their little child, and all the household chores. Usually social and outgoing, she had difficulties making friends, which she blamed on the different cultural mentality of the inhabitants of that region. The last straw for her were health problems she developed as a result of being in a climate zone that was non-suitable for her. Inga's severe allergies forced her husband to ask for a transfer. He was denied in such a rude manner, that, usually highly respected and considered, he got extremely offended. It coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union, when each republic/country sought its independence. If Sergey had decided to stay, he would have had to take Kazakhstan military oath. He did not want to pledge to the government of that republic, because of the unpredictable political situation and the possibility of military actions toward, for example, the Baltic republics, where Sergey's parents lived. He quit his job, and the whole family relocated back to Moscow.

In Moscow, Inga and Sergey opened their own small business. The workload for both of them was so unmanageable that Inga decided to send seven-year old Igor to live with Inga's mother in Ukraine for eight months. It was their first long-term separation, and even though she visited him often, it was still a heartbreaking experience for her. Before that she spent a lot of time with Igor sharing all the important moments of his life. In spite of their hard work, the business did not last long and it did not bring any substantial profit.

Around that time Inga's older sister, Polina, found a way to immigrate to the US; and Inga's mother immigrated to Israel. Inga stated that she wanted to emigrate from the time she was in elementary school, but her sister's immigration became the first real

opportunity for her. Even though Sergey was adamantly against it at first, Inga started to work on immigration papers and on gently persuading her husband to consider this as an option.

Inga described a dramatic story of getting through several difficult preliminary immigration steps and learning that her mother was terminally ill all at the same time. She went to Israel with her immediate family in time to spend the final days with her mother and bury her. In spite of the immense tragedy for Inga of losing her mother, she also talked about being astonished by the reality of the first Western country she ever encountered. This trip, combined with the difficulties of going through the Soviet emigration system, persuaded Sergey to become more proactive in the emigration process as well.

Inga dated her yearnings to have another child back to when she felt Igor was getting more independent, around the age six-seven. However, it was important for her to feel the same inclination in her husband, which was lacking. Only after the death of her mother, she felt her argument for another child became strong enough for him to agree with.

Inga defined her first impressions of New York as somewhat unexpected and shocking, both visually and as a mode of life; very different from her idealized picture. She had to plunge into American reality rather quickly, through enrolling Igor in school and helping him through the first months of it. Her second meaningful and massive encounter with the American social system was through giving birth to her daughter, when she had to interact with physicians and hospital staff. She found them to be very helpful and respectful towards her, unlike people in the same position back in the FSU. She also tried to interact as much as possible with English-speaking neighbors, both out of cultural curiosity and a desire for language practice. She spent about two years taking care of Sasha, while Sergey went through college, getting his major in computer programming. When Inga felt that Sasha was grown enough to communicate her needs to another adult, she went to work as a service provider to developmentally challenged adults, which was relatively close to her field of expertise. Soon she moved up to a more advanced position, and was offered an opportunity to expand her education by getting an MSW degree with a tuition waiver.

Over the years, Inga grew more and more irritated with Sergey. One of the reasons, was his lack of initiative in any kind of professional or job activities. After finishing college, he could not find job that would exactly match his skills, and refused several job offers that required a professional leap from him. Inga attempted to use her newly acquired connections to help him with his job search, but, according to her, he was not willing to accept her help. He took another class in technical support of specific machinery, and they offered a job placement for him, which did not offer a substantial salary, but proved to be a lasting position until the present time. Inga expressed acute annoyance with his inertness and lack of concern for their material needs as a family.

Inga enjoyed her academic and professional path, even though the combination of full-time work, family, and studies was difficult. She described her work and study in terms of the professional advancement and acculturation experience where she was constantly learning about other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. She also spoke about learning regarding her own abilities to stretch the limits of what she conceptualized to be her personal limitations. The social and interpersonal norms of this society allowed her to actualize her full potential. Also, Inga had noticed her different style of handling her daughter, Sasha, compared to her parental style towards Igor. She attributed this to several factors, including her own maturation, their gender difference, and also her absorbing different cultural values here, in the US. Her first experience of what she considered to be significant therapeutic change, dated back to when Igor was about eight years old, and she participated in several group therapy seminars. The insight was centered on the influence she had on Igor's emotional development, when she pushed him to succeed academically out of her own insecurities.

Inga feels that now she is in a better position to parent her children because she feels more fulfilled professionally and personally. She also has more appreciation for their individual differences. She is trying to make up for those years of "harsher than needed" handling of Igor by staying close to his world without impinging on him. She spent a lot of time discussing Igor and Sasha's current developmental stages with all the intrinsic joy and concerns. All in all, she defined her marital relationship as a source of chronic annoyance and dissatisfaction, while characterizing her parental experience and professional role as alive and vibrant spheres of existence.

## **Inga's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes** **"I have this theory that parents grow together with their children"**

### **Leitmotiv**

From my experience, I can tell that some things come together...The child is not born and then immediately goes to school. ...He is born and you go through all his stages together with him. By the time he has to go to school, you are ready that you will spend 5-6 hours separately...So these two years should prepare me for the fact that he [Igor] will leave the house [for college]. (P.1)

Immigration is an interesting path, very educational, many pit-falles and bumps on it, lots of things that I didn't know and have learned. Many interesting people.. A different perception of the world, more tranquil perception of the world. ...My extremism left me. I came to recognize the colorfulness of the world. (P.71)

I was tough. I mellowed a lot. I still can be rough at the edges, but I have softened, too. (P.79)

The theme of change has permeated the whole interview and was consistent regardless of its presentation. Often times Inga generalized and verbalized a specific tendency, and then provided me with ample examples to illustrate this tendency. Her narrative was coherent and fluid; created by portraying consecutive stages of her personal development. Her description of the parenting process was based on her comparing her styles at different points of her life and in connection to varied circumstances. Inga's depicting her immigration path was two-fold: she paid some attention to the actual details of the process, and mostly she focused on how her personality was influenced by new opportunities and unique encounters. The same holds true for other areas of her life – her friendships, her marital relationship. Inga's professional development turned out to be an exception to this rule, possibly because she generally described this sphere as conflict-free and satisfactory. Over the immigration years, she expanded her professional territory, but stayed within the framework of her primary interests in social services and therapeutic change.

### **Transitions**

Transition into parenthood; first experiences

First time around we planned not to have a child because I was in my last year of university. ...But we were not using any normal birth control methods, like many young Soviet people. So I got pregnant...It was fine with me, but I had a problem with the way Sergey reacted – I needed support. He is not an emotional person. With both kids I had difficult pregnancies. ...I don't have this pure happiness of pregnancy until I feel the baby moving. (P.10)

I grew up among women; I was not prepared to have a boy...Also I got very tired from labor. No support, no husband around, no Lamaz-shmabaz, but a constant harassment.... It was not a crazy excitement. Only later, when I brought him home, I was looking and looking at him and I liked him more and more...(Pp.10-11)

The very first thing that came along with having a baby was a necessity to be with him – constantly. It changed many priorities radically because I was used to living by myself, for myself. Suddenly this necessity to be with someone, a serious necessity that was not under my control. A difficult change. (P.23)

Inga, if compared to other female and most male participants, provided the most elaborate description of emotional changes when becoming a parent. Even though she defined herself later on as being family oriented, the transition was both gradual and complicated for her. Inga openly expressed ambivalence about giving up her freedom, acquiring new responsibilities; and about the baby's gender, which could be related to her history of physical abuse. The transition was unplanned to a degree, both for her and for her husband. While acknowledging her own ambivalence, she denied her husband his right to experience and express mixed feelings about the situation, requiring ultimate support from him. By means of projective identification, she managed to elicit even more resentment from him, which she then used to displace her aggressive impulses.

Motherhood has several stages for me. First goes connection with a child as utterly yours being, born by you. ...It started when I first put Igor to my breast. I felt something that I've never experienced before. Next spire of motherhood was when he was about 6-7. With his first independent steps I suddenly recognized in myself an intense need for him to stay close to me. That's when I felt that extreme need to have another child; to bring back that state of absolute dependency when he was an infant and I was everything for him... But it turned out that I had to wait [for that] for many years. (P.7)

It was very different with Sasha; a lot of planning with her. I wanted a child very much...Sergey was resolutely against it. "We are not settled"... His lack of desire was important for me...When my mom died; it was such a trauma for me. I told him, "Look, my mom died, but I have a sister. I am not alone...Sooner or later, we will be gone. Igor is alone, he needs someone." Sergey said O'K. Look, my mother died, it was difficult to argue with me then. He was trying to take care of me. ...I still had a difficult pregnancy with her, but I perceived it differently. (P.12)

The reason why I put quotes describing two events that happened ten years apart, under one subtitle, instead of holding to a chronological order of events, is because Inga's narrative is build upon comparison and contrast. In order to tear apart these comparisons, I would have to rewrite her narrative, completely losing authenticity. It is remarkable that Inga was able to recognize in herself a wish for intense closeness, yet there was no indication in her story, as it will be evident later, that she attempted to hold on to Igor's dependency, tying him to herself. Instead, she channelled her feelings into wanting another baby. And again, Sergey was described as an external force voicing concerns about their material competence to stand up to the task, so to speak. She was emotionally driven, and his role apparently was to worry about the pragmatics. The timing of the second baby, besides the arguments emphasized by Inga, might be related to her loss in one more way. Losing an object to which she once was symbiotically tied, intensified her desire to repeat that symbiotic connection in a reciprocal situation – she could not re-create her mother, but at least, she could re-create a situation of ultimate dependency.

#### Both children; early childhood transitions

It is incredibly important for me to be with the child for the first one and a half – two years. I stayed with Igor, I stayed with Sasha. For me parting with children when they go to day-care is a big tragedy. When they are small, I have a remarkably strong *attachment* to them. ...At two, Sasha was able to communicate her needs to other adults; she also could tell me if something was wrong. But still, psychologically it was difficult for me. (Pp.20-21)

Basically, Inga described a level of attachment so primal in nature that even with her constant propensity for comparison, she felt similarly toward both children at that stage. Only later, at more socially shaped stages, she drew a distinction that, according to her, was determined by her own developmental trajectory.

... When I used to live with my mom, I did not have my *identity*. When I went to Moscow to college, I started to develop a sense of myself. I had

control over my life. When I got married and went to Kazakhstan, I ceased to be myself. I became the wife of lieutenant T. It was a huge loss for me.... Later on I reflected on what had happened. I didn't like that place. Even though it has been always easy for me to make friends, there was not much intimacy involved. Very different people.... It was hard. ...I had a great job, I was doing exactly what I liked, but still...It seems now that because I was missing out on nurturance, I couldn't nurture him [Igor] properly. I was too harsh; I kept too big of a distance. Even though we spent so much time together. ...But he needed even more love and forgiveness for all that small stuff, like broken dishes. (P.9)

I was ugly, I was this, and I was that. I was very insecure.... [However] I was satisfied with my family life and with my husband back then. It was much later that my demands changed. (P.26)

Inga's description of her self-concept at that period of time is remarkably multidimensional. Her interpretation of the relationship with Igor seemed to be convincing if one was to take into account only factors that were present at the moment. She felt deprived from important components of her life that were relatively recently acquired and valuable. So it is possible that she was not able to provide enough warmth and flexibility to Igor. However, if we look into Inga's history of childhood abuse and material deprivation, the hypotheses of her overly identifying with Igor and assuming that he was somewhat deprived as a young child could be plausible as well. From this point of view, it was not possible for her to provide enough nurturance to Igor because the void stemmed from a different relationship and was deeply internalized.

[When Igor was six-seven] we worked from dawn to dusk with Serge y in our business. ...So maybe that separation was initiated more by me than by him. (P.16)

We had this big problem with Sasha not cleaning her room, her toys. All of a sudden, she began to do it. This is [important] that the child can take care of herself. ...It is *gradual*, but you notice that the child does something she or he couldn't do before. You note that you don't have to do it any more. [Laughing] (P.16)

Interestingly enough, it seems that so far Inga was the only participant to discuss both her need for the child to become gradually more independent, and her personal benefits from this process. This, combined with acknowledging strong attachment, could create a strong and flexible base for a gradual process of letting go.

When Sasha was born, I suddenly saw Igor in a different light.... I saw that he possessed qualities she couldn't even dream of. .... Sasha is

different.... maybe because of that feminine source in her, she is self-centered.... self-sufficient, even though she needs me, too. ...Empathy can be difficult for a child, but he had it, he didn't need to be taught that. Then he taught her. (P.10)

She let me know, much more than Igor did, that she was a separate persona. I felt her as a separate being. (P.31)

She is an American. Well, yes, she is being raised in my family, but then the society influences her, too. She was two and a half, and she resolutely refused to share her toys. It is O'K in this society. Over there it would be considered terrible. Here it is considered to be normal to defend your belongings. So then I stopped and thought, "What is my own attitude concerning my belongings? How important is it for me?" In order to raise her, I have had to figure myself out. (P.24)

Because of the way Inga structured her narrative, we need to go over all the transitions in order to understand this particular transition of being able to see Sasha as a "separate being". But to give it a short preview, it seems that, when Inga was going through the stage of early childhood with her second child, she already had been able to reclaim, at least partially, her self-concept of a person standing on her own and not as the "wife of lieutenant T," or "the daughter of M." Therefore, she did not have such a pronounced need to identify with and feel guilty over the insatiable neediness of a child, as it was and, to a degree, still is with Igor. Inga was free to identify with Sasha as a separated human being, independent and femininely "self-centered," wanting to have and willing to defend her belongings, both actual and metaphorical.

#### Latency – preteen transitions

He just told me not to enter when he was in the shower. Just like that, very calmly. He was seven-eight, even younger. "I don't want you in here. I am all naked." He began to keep a distance, "Mom, don't kiss me." (P.33)

I couldn't stand for him not to be as good as other strong kids in some subjects. It enraged me...I worked it off on him. I yelled at him. There was no dialog between us, only a monolog of an angry mother. If somebody had taped me and later played it back to me, I probably would have hung myself. [Laughing]. (P.28)

The fact that Inga remembered Igor's inclination to limit physical contact with her, cannot serve as a proof that she was able to respond to his request. However, her

noticing his behavior provided her with a chance to respond appropriately as opposed to, for example, another participant, Tanya, who never noticed her daughter's quest for independence until the girl was in her late adolescent-yearly adulthood transition. On the other hand, Igor's latency and his launching into a bigger world meant being evaluated by others. While handling physical separation seemingly well, Inga was not ready to take the next step of mental separation, or looser identification, where she would not feel such a terrible narcissistic insult at his less than perfect performance.

[Inga described going through the intense group therapy experience] I started to think about myself not only as someone's child, but also as [someone's] mom. The very mom that creates these problems. ...I told Igor, "Honey, I sometimes yell at you...I feel terribly afterwards...I am learning now how not to do it." ...Of course, it was impossible to change at once. [Described an episode when she was screaming at Igor, and a friend of hers made a remark about it] So he turned to her and said, "It's O'K. My mom is trying to resolve her problems." It was such a revelation for me, I saw a PERSON who was listening and paying attention. ..This was not even the most important part. The most important was for me to get that those were his achievements, not mine. (P. 30-31)

Apparently, this shift in Inga's perception of herself, not only brought about an acute sense of guilt and responsibility. It is possible that it helped her disentangle her identification with Igor as a child, thus gaining a necessary distance that allowed her to see him as a person on his own and not her embodiment.

Everything happened at the same time. Sasha was born, we came to the US. Everybody around us was telling that [immigration] is easy for kids. I was trying to imagine myself in his shoes... I paid as much attention to him [at that period] as it was possible, spending a lot of time with him. I've learned that he managed to get into a fight with other Russian boys who told him that his mommy was "*fat and ugly*". ...I developed a different set of feelings toward him as to a person who was trying to take care of me, even though he was under such stress. ...When Sasha grew up a little and started to argue with him, I sat her down and told her that Igor was her older brother who knew much more than she did. If she had her doubts, she could come to me, but she should listen to him...I said it more for his sake. so that he knew how I perceived him. (Pp.13-14)

We can draw an interesting comparison between the way Inga managed Igor through the birth of her second child and through his first encounters with school and the English language, and the way the other participant, Lena, allowed her son, who was younger than Igor, to struggle on his own with his first steps in school. Lena, according to her, lost track of her older son's tussles of adolescence because she was so engaged

with the younger son. Even though, earlier, Inga acknowledged her personal benefits from the child's separation, there was no evidence of the counter phobic abrupt separations so frequent in Lena's narrative. On the contrary, Inga gradually relinquished her control, occasionally providing more support and guidance. At the same time, she was able to notice and admire his rapidly developing individuality and ego strength.

#### First stages of immigration: multiple migrations; decision-making

I had three emigrations. The first one was when I went to Moscow to college. Second one – from Moscow to Kazakhstan. The third one was more serious, because it included the whole family – from Kazakhstan to Moscow. ..And the most serious one – moving to America. (P. 45)

A thought that I want to leave that country germinated when I was in the third grade and I was called a foul kike. I rushed home and told my mom that I wanted to go to my country. (P.46)

In the late seventies my mom was about to immigrate to Israel, but couldn't... There was a lot of hassle, mom was fired from work. My uncles dropped all relationships with us. For about a year my mother was not able to find a job, she was considered a traitor.... Emigration – a horror in this world. My uncles told my mom that she could throw herself out of the window – they still wouldn't help her... But she shielded me from all of it, I did not feel all the severities. (P.49)

And then my emigration started. There was a little fear. But then it disappeared after our visit to Israel. (P.49)

I started to want it [to emigrate] very much. (What was different after you finalized your decision to emigrate?) Surely I started to see the worst in everything; I also started to point it out to Sergey. I needed to see that and I needed to show that to him. Boorishness (of the general public) had always annoyed me, I just didn't know to what extent. (P.53)

Inga examined preparatory stages on many different levels. One side of the process was physical migration within one country, which was governed by her desire to establish herself as an independent individual, to establish a family later on; and to seek better educational and professional opportunities. Another side of the process was in the ripening of her internal protest against intolerance toward her as a minority. Even though she was “shielded” from major difficulties, she identified enough with her single mother to feel wounded by her family's troubles. Her search for a place where she would feel at home started relatively early; and it brought her from a small Ukrainian

town to the largest city, which then came short of her hopes for material well-being. As soon as the opportunity to immigrate to the US became real, the internal process of separation from the FSU started for Inga. As opposed to Tanya, who was not able to acknowledge and reflect on her estrangement from FSU, and instead concretely mentioned the worsening of her relationships with friends, Inga indicated a change in her perception of the surrounding reality.

While she was in the process of getting her immigration papers for the US, Inga received news about her mother's terminal illness, so that she had to fly to Israel immediately.

My first acquaintanceship with Western reality started from my first step onto Israeli plane. It was such a shock! ...This girl [stewardess] greeted me with such a smile and "Shalom," I got scared. What was that, what? ...I'd never seen such faces!...At the customs they were supposed to ask about the length of my stay. Do you know how they did it?! "Oh, this is so great you are going to visit your mama. And for how long will you stay? Oh, why so little?" I swear! (P.61)  
I became accustomed so quickly to people smiling to each other. (P.65)

[When I came back to Moscow] everything seemed to be black-and-white with no lucidity. No emotions, all the spicy smells were gone. The cold was not only everywhere, it emanated from people. ...The woman at the customs stared me down with such hostility; she sizzled me with her gaze. ...The only bright and warm spot in the airport was Sergey waiting for me. (P.65)

I saw that world in a different light. Even more so, Sergey did, too. The question of going back to Russia [if it wouldn't work out in the US] disappeared. (P.66)

I needed to go to New York, because my sister was here...After my mom's death, I had such a void in the relationship. I knew that she would never be able to substitute for my mom, but still...(P.67)

It seemed that Inga's personal tragedy of witnessing her mother's rapid decline and death sharpened both the impressions of Israel and the shock of homecoming. The imminent loss could have also made her more susceptible to personal changes, like the one she described as deeply accepting social friendliness. Upon her homecoming, the differences between "Western reality" and the cold, almost vicious, aloofness of fellow countrymen created an unbearable contrast, thus acting as a catalyst to her leaving.

### Arrival and first encounters in the new country

[When my sister picked us up at the airport] I got of the car and saw those weird people speaking not even in English...I couldn't even understand where I was. .... Then I saw that long building with a long hallway, and I was sure it was a bunkhouse...But I liked the apartment a lot...Then we went to my sister's place that was incredibly small and hot. The next day we went for a walk. The climate drove me crazy – I was pregnant. But I loved that neighborhood, it was beautiful. It is still my favorite place – the Upper West Side. (Pp.70-71)

I was fearful of what was going to happen; what would turn out fine, what wouldn't. I held a tremendous suspense in my hands. What do you expect, we just got there. (P.26)

Both quotes are interesting in their overt vulnerability. If the second quote openly acknowledged fear and anxiety, the first one illustrated, on a more concrete level, how these emotional states influenced Inga's perception of reality. Some other participants described their impressions in an either positive or negative light. Inga was able to see different angles, which was not surprising, taking into account her strong tendency for comparison. Nevertheless, her rapid oscillation between positive and negative observations served as evidence of deep distress.

Giving birth to Sasha was my first serious *experience* within the American system. It was important because I had an opportunity to compare...The only fact that it was possible to be with my husband! ...There was a constant stream of people who helped me to adjust to nursing. I requested to be with my child right after labor...They didn't take away my child – the child turned out to be different. Even though, while pregnant with her, I went through all those immigration hassles. (P.77)

When Sasha grew up a little, I started to socialize with Americans, to develop some language skills. That was fascinating. ...Also Sasha's venture into an American nursery school...First she attended a Russian nursery school where I was told to leave her and run - exactly the way it was set up in Russia. I was not about to do it. I needed to tell her that I would be back. What the hell?! In the American nursery school, I was encouraged to stay until she got comfortable. I loved it! (P.79)

It was not surprising that first encounters with American culture in its broad sense Inga received through her children. The experience of giving birth often gets mentioned in the conversations of female immigrants when comparing two countries, possibly because of its primal nature and vastly different approaches. Out of five female participants, the two who had that experience in both countries talked about it at great

length. Lena described it in terms of her astonishment about hygienic norms, which, in her opinion, were much looser here, compared to Russia. She mentioned being well taken care of, but concentrated on the concrete details of doctor's gowns and her husband's being present. Inga discussed the Russian medical approach to this issue and the sense of deep humiliation that was an indispensable component, in her opinion, of child-bearing and labor experiences in the FSU. Even though, when depicting her child birth experience in the US, she supplied some concrete details of getting help with nursing, she also alluded to her feelings of being in charge and empowered by the process, and to the different emotional outlook of a child who has not been separated from her mother. And again, Lena described her impressions of the American child care system, in terms of its technical structure and hygienic arrangements, comparing it non-favorably with the Russian highly structured system. Inga chose to concentrate more on the human factor, discussing the approach to the process of separation within two nursery schools (both located in New York, but one run according to Russian standards).

My first desire was to bring all my friends [from Russia] here and feed them...I wrote letters describing everything. I wanted to share so much. But I didn't miss Moscow yet even though I loved it so much. (P.78)

For the first couple of years, I didn't allow myself anything Russian. No reading, no TV, even no newspapers. I suffered; I especially suffered from the lack of reading in Russian. (P.83)

It is possible to distinguish two pronounced trends in that stage of Inga's immigration. In her relationship with the country of origin, she seemed to be frozen in a moment, not allowing herself any interactions with Russian culture. This attitude, rigid at that time, attitude was in sharp contrast to her rather fluid and flexible relationship with the new country, where she was able to be open and selectively receptive toward a whole host of new experiences. One can argue for the adaptive function of this split, which prevented her from being over stimulated during earlier stages of immigration.

#### Advanced stage of immigration

I tell him [her husband] regularly that I want to be inspired by him, I want to be proud of him, and I can't. ...He succeeded over there [in Russia]

because he followed a trail, but here he has to do it himself...I am losing my interest in him, because I used to perceive him as a strong person, and now he is all adrift...And he doesn't want to accept my help, maybe because he thinks I will reproach him for that. As if he doesn't remember how I praised him on every corner for being so strong and smart. ...He knew and still knows English much better than I do, but it's a tragedy for him to actually open his trap and say something! (P. 75)

The issues of Sergey's lack of initiative has always been at the focus of Inga's attention, but, at that particular stage of immigration, the tension between them reached a remarkable intensity. We observed a similar theme in Anna's narrative of the different pace of her and her husband's adjustment. But Anna felt the most worried about her husband's split existence between two countries, when he was not able to find job opportunities in the US. She admired his effort and urged him to settle for lower expectations. Inga is deeply disturbed by her husband's inclination to stay with a low-paid paraprofessional job. She was the most disappointed about the discrepancy between her high expectations from him and the reality of his relatively slow and inflexible adjustment. The difference between her, who ventured into a difficult professional field, successfully completed a graduate degree, and continues to advance professionally and socially, and Sergey, who was initially better equipped professionally and in terms of language, but stayed within a situation that was arranged for him by the social services, is striking. One would wonder about the complementarities of their roles and functions. It seems to be plausible that Sergey contained Inga's fears and doubts, so that she could conquer the new world for both of them.

He [her husband] used to come home from college in Brooklyn and grumble about blacks, etc. It annoyed me incredibly. I am so not a racist. If my children decide to marry an Asian, black, white, my only concern would be for them not to have culture shock. In any case I am not going to be adamantly against this... I used to work in Harlem and I felt very comfortable there. I understand that the majority of Russians are racists because the unknown always feels dangerous... I soak up these differences, this diversity; you can't imagine the extent I enjoy it. (P. 76)

I told one lady that I was born in Ukraine, than moved to Moscow, from Moscow to Kazakhstan, than back to Moscow, then – to New York. My husband is from Lithuania. I told her that *it is hard to say where I am from.* She said, "*What do you mean, where you are from. You are from*

Washington Heights.” I just loved it. I feel so comfortable saying, “I am Russian, I am from Washington Heights.”(P.82)

In the last quote, we can observe an ego-syntonic yet significant shift in Inga’s self-concept that consolidated many different layers of her personality. Her being from small provincial town, but feeling at home in a cosmopolitan city, her travels and suffering in the alien, for her, culture of Kazakhstan, her delight in even more cosmopolitan New York, each found its place under the roof of her being “Russian from Washington Heights.”

That stage of starting work was interesting. The philosophy of training was new. The system of supervision was astonishing: to have a person being engaged with you around your work. “Get up and go do your work, I said!” [was a model in Russia]. Amazing that it was O’K to ask the same question more than once. (P. 78)

After three years of being here, I stopped by a friend of mine who had Russian TV on. I was totally hypnotized by the easy of my understanding. Language complicates perception. From then on I allowed myself a splash of Russian. The thought emerged about visiting Moscow, for the sake of the city and friends. But it is not a priority. (P.83)

As opposed to the initial stage of immigration, after tentatively finding and insuring her place in the new country, Inga “unfroze” her relationship with her country of origin. The initial urgency to take in the English language and all the nuts and bolts of the new reality, as soon as possible, gradually subsided with registering her first successful advancements on this path. Inga felt more open to her “missing” her city and her friends. If before she wanted to “feed them,” at this stage she wanted to be nurtured by the familiarity of language, landscapes, and people.

#### Current relationships with children

I am O’K with discussing sex, drugs, and smoking with Igor. (P.15)

He can cook; he can feed his sister...He is able to make independent decisions...I am not worried about him venturing into the big world. (P.16)

All of a sudden she printed her first letter, she started to read, and then, wow, so big, her reasoning was so logical. It’s about Sasha. With Igor it was interesting to observe his relationships with peers, with girls. I learned about some of his more mature actions. It was gradual. (P.17)

With Sasha it is a little more difficult to accept her opinions, her decisions. Maybe because she is still little. I do give her a choice, for example, in food. But I don't give that many choices when they are little...Igor roller skates aggressively. It is horrible. I consider this to be risky, especially because he is a dancer... I talk to him, but I do not ban it. He told me that it was important for him to skate. The moment came when I felt it was essential for him to know that there are things I would allow him to do. So that he can come to me and share something that can potentially shock me. It happened when he started to travel to high school ...meaning he had to be on his own so much. (P.18)

Last year Igor announced that he didn't want to attend the School of American Ballet any more. I was surprised by my own composure at his decision. He said that he didn't want to be a professional choreographer. I said, "You know what, it is your choice."... It is my own stage, too. I became more acceptant. (P.25)

It was difficult for Inga to recall that many areas of Sasha's developing independence, which was understandable in light of her age. The main notion, when comparing her parenting style toward Sasha to Igor's early childhood, was more acceptance and calm when dealing with Sasha's occasional misbehaving. Inga supplied many examples of Igor's growing independence and the gradualness of this process. She paid special attention to developing a deeper, more mature level of trust between her and Igor, to insure an emotional connection between them when she had to let him travel independently and spend most of the day by himself. It is a noteworthy difference with another participant's (Lena) approach to the same stage of her older son's development, when he started to travel to high school and spent much time on his own. She acknowledged the abruptness of this process, but failed to provide a supportive framework of possibly strengthening their emotional bond. On the contrary, Lena felt dis-involved from his life at that period of time.

Only now emerged an opportunity to go and buy clothing for myself, regardless of other family member's demands. Like a woman. A couple of things influenced this process. A close friend of mine who said that I am beautiful and that I have to pay attention to myself. ...Also that feeling that I am not getting any younger. But again, I probably was not ready to hear that [the friend's remark] before. (P.15)

They [Igor and Sasha] self-affirm and I do, too. [Laughing] Not only for myself and for society, but for them as well. For them to see that I work, I gain the respect of others, I achieve my goals. ..And that it can be a pleasure. (P.21)

I have certain feelings of my own selfhood. (P.5)  
Five years ago I would have never said it, but I was talented as a little girl.  
(P.25)

Inga was exceptionally articulate about different areas of her self-concept where she experienced change over the last couple of years. Even though all along her professional career was a source of satisfaction for her, lately she described it more in terms of the influence it has on her feelings of self-respect and in terms of occupying a particular niche in this society, and developing a professional network. Inga also paid substantial attention to the changes of her conceptualizing herself as a woman. She traced her path from feeling ugly and undesirable regardless of the quantity of boyfriends available to her, through the stage of being preoccupied with her family's needs, to the state of mind in which she managed to reserve a seat for herself. Inga described this as an internal positive transformation. The change in her self-concept had a remarkable effect on her vision of herself retrospectively, an example of which was given in the last quote.

#### Current stage of immigration

I reminisce [about Russia] more now than early on. (P.78)  
By the way, I am talking about the country I left, not about the way it is  
now, because I don't know it. (P.86)

I am a little afraid to visit Moscow, afraid to meet that cold stare. It hurts  
because I love Russia so much. I have a wish to bring some of my good  
American friends to Russia. (It reminds me of...) Yes, my desire to feed my  
friends in Moscow when I first came here. People that show interest toward  
Russia, I have that strong wish to share [Moscow] with them. (P.84)

I am happy that I have *experience* of that life. I have the distance that allows  
me to assess positive and not so positive factors ...I think I got a good  
education, an interesting one [in Russia]. Honestly, the educational system  
is better over there. *I am sorry.* [Laughing] I love America...The medical  
system is better here regarding the attitude toward the patient. A physician  
in Russia was so oppressed that he didn't have time or energy for his  
patient. ...Also the philosophy of work with people with disabilities – I  
could only dream about it back in Russia. I am not saying that everybody  
adheres to it, but the fact that it exists [is amazing]. ... (P.72)

At the earlier stage of immigration, Inga was able to allow herself to “unfreeze” her relationship with Russia, she started to read, to watch Russian TV, and she admitted her desire to visit the city. At the current stage, Inga described her connections to her country of origin on a level of feelings rather than actions. She experienced the influence of an ambiguous combination of centrifugal and centripetal forces. She was able to acknowledge both longing and pain combined with an understanding that her experiences are related to the country as it was at the moment of her leaving. Inga used “the distance” as a service of forging her connection to both countries. Inga noted both positive and negative aspects of her experience, but without the tendency for splitting or compartmentalization so prominent in some other participants’ narratives.

I have more self-assurance and knowledge of what I want to do. I became more acceptant to people, more tolerant to stupidity. It doesn’t annoy me anymore, but rather amuses me...I started to love myself as a woman and respect myself. I do not allow anybody to offend me anymore, not even my husband. I became such an active fighter for my own rights. (P.79)

People who went through immigration differ in regard to knowledge they have about this reality and that reality. And somehow they put it together, and take it apart, and live within and between these two cultures. Something of our own gets crystallized. (P.81)

Inga listed the changes in her self-concept that are similar to the ones she mentioned before, when talking about her current relationships with her children. With some of those changes she could supply examples of what, in her opinion, had triggered them. The other transformations were determined more internally so that Inga just noted the change over the years. The common trend of those changes was the notion of knowledge and self-respect. Her perception of what immigration entails was remarkable in her tendency to characterize immigration as a fluid progression, but also mentioned the lack of uni-directionality. For her, being an immigrant is about “putting together, taking apart” different realities, rather than solidifying any kind of stable mix of cultures.

To summarize, I want to go over several particular tendencies in Inga’s style of letting go of her country of origin and of her children. One thing that attracts attention and distinguishes Inga’s narrative from narratives of the other participants is the way her

parenthood and her immigration experience were such intrinsic and indivisible parts of her life. In order to explain the events and feelings concerning these topics, she needed to reference consistently to other areas of her existence like her professional role, her marital relationship, and her friendships.

Inga, as opposed to the majority of participants, acknowledged that, together with strong and rapidly developing attachment to her newborn child, she had serious difficulties in adjusting to the fact that she was so utterly responsible for the baby who required her involved presence around the clock. Similarly, she recalled her first impressions of New York as a combination of resentment and enjoyment. She did not deny any part of that initial mixture, even though her relationship with New York turned out to be strongly positive soon after.

There also was a similarity between the way Inga utilized her husband's role in the family during the initial stage of family planning and later on in the immigration process. He was the one cautious about the decision to have children; and he was the one to air on the conservative side of the adjustment process. According to Inga, he did not want to make professional leaps, he held on strongly to a wide-spread notion in Russia of being wary of cultural diversity; he decided to keep the job that was poorly paid but stable. In both instances of managing her parenthood and her immigration experience, Inga seemed to employ her husband's character features and tendencies to project and contain her potential fears, in order to be able to conquer the world.

Speaking about first stages of immigration, it is worth noting Inga's strong self-preservation tendency to shut down all unnecessary stimuli, like her nostalgic feelings toward Moscow or Russian literature. It bears a strong resemblance to her pronounced maternal instincts during the first years of her babies' lives when she chose staying with them full-time over any other professional or personal accomplishments.

The most noteworthy, for the purpose of this research, was Inga's account of differences in her parenting style in regard to her ability to perceive the child as a separate but closely related to her individual, with his or her own achievements and issues. This became feasible and brought about a possibility of letting go of the child without over identifying with him/her, only after significant changes in her self-concept regarding becoming her own person and accepting a variety of new roles. During the

immigration process, her self-concept underwent a series of transformations, most of them ego-syntonic for Inga. She reported on crystallization of her professional and gender identity, and her interpersonal relationships in the process of going through stages of immigration. That brought about a new sense of belonging to both countries and, most importantly, expanded her sense of agency. As Inga stated,

There was a moment when I came to realize that I could live anywhere now.  
With all that knowledge of how I want to live and what I want to do.  
(P.82)

## **Lena's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Lena is a forty-two years old female who emigrated from a large city in Russia fourteen years ago. Currently, she lives with her husband of twenty-three years and their seven-year old son. Their nineteen-year old son attends college in New York Metropolitan area and lives separately. Lena works as a hairdresser in a prestigious hair salon and her husband works as a manager at an engineering company. They own an apartment in Manhattan, but do not live there because of “no pets” rule. At the present time, their older son lives in this apartment, and they rent a place in one of the boroughs.

As Lena stated, she came from a warm and loving intact family where, she and her older brother, were well taken care of in atmosphere of mutual respect and fairness. Both of her parents worked six days a week (a regular work week in the sixties in the Soviet Union) so she received a lot of care from her grandparents. She characterized her childhood as “free and rich, and sheltered from too much knowledge about negative side of the world.” She, like many others, had a chance to explore her neighborhood and to play freely outside without adult supervision and with no awareness that something dangerous could happen to them as children.

Lena's family encouraged her to get a college degree in teaching in spite of her early proclivity and interest in styling outfits and hair of others. However, this occupation was not considered to be decent or intellectual enough in her parents' social circles, therefore, she went on to get her degree from Teacher's College and worked at a high school for about eighteen months. She described her teaching job as too demanding and time-consuming to continue after she became a mother.

Lena befriended her husband-to-be when she was still a high school student and he was in college. They dated steadily and married when she was twenty years old. They waited to have children until she graduated from college because they did not have an available family member to take care of a child. In Lena's words, it felt like a long wait for both of them because they had known each other for so many years and also because they were the last ones to have children among their friends.

For Lena, the motherhood had started when she mothered her dolls as a child. During her pregnancy, she had worried a lot about physical and psychological normality

of her baby. She referred to that constant worry, as “the more one knows the worse one sleeps”; alluding to a vast knowledge about possible pathology absorbed during her college studies. When she was told she was having twins, it took her time and effort to adjust psychologically to the news. As soon as she did, she was told she was carrying only one fetus; and again she had serious difficulties in getting used to the new information.

Having a baby, Lena described, was the most joyful moment in her life. She was a full-time mother until her first-born was about eighteen months old. She described him as an incredibly sensitive child who could sense her minute absence and could not be soothed by anyone else. After being with him all this time, she became tired and found a part-time job. Her mother started to take care for him. Lena described the separation as a very painful process for her and the child. She started to work as a make-up artist at a state movie studio. This occupation was of interest to her, and it did not require a full-time commitment. They were also thinking about emigration, and her new occupation seemed to be more practical for another country.

Lena identified her husband as an initiator of the emigration process. She felt that he was the one constantly dissatisfied with the communist system. She herself did not experience “the system” as particularly anti-Semitic or aggressively intrusive, the way he did. However, she did refer to some vague sense of danger, especially around her husband and his manner of saying what was on his mind without reservations. Lena did not believe until the very last moment that they would get a governmental permission to emigrate because of the nature of her husband’s military engineering career. She did not prepare herself for immigration to the US in terms of English language acquisition.

Lena came to the US with her immediate family. As she stated, hers and her husband’s extended family all emigrated within a few years, most of them before her. Many times throughout the interview, Lena expressed pain and dissatisfaction around the topics containing an implicit or explicit comparison of the FSU and the US. After being in the US for fourteen years, she regarded her language level as inadequate and her style of life as hectic and frustrating. The part of the interview concerning the

immigration process was somewhat abridged because of her very apparent suffering while engaged in the discussion of this topic.

Lena used several metaphors of cutting off, or breaking an object, in order to describe her approach to leaving her city of origin. She felt that there was no return for her and therefore no point in dwelling on her feelings about the city or the people that she left. Lena described her first months in New York as a period of bewilderment, disorientation, and frustration, some of which is still present. When she first came to the US, she could not understand a word in English and could not see herself ever getting through the language barrier. In spite of that, she was actively involved with several different Language Schools, taking classes at the beginner's level. While still attending one of the language classes, she enrolled herself into a Beauty School in order to start a new career. This step was met with disbelief by her extended family that, according to Lena, never took seriously her inclination to go into that field. At the same time, she took a job as a sales person in a large department store, which, according to her, was exceptionally challenging because of her still very tentative ability to comprehend English. On that occasion, and many times throughout the interview, she regarded gratefully people who were forgiving and generous toward her as an immigrant.

After completing her school requirements, she found a job in a hair-salon, where she worked for about two years. The hours there conflicted with her desire to spend as much time as possible with her son after school; therefore, she found another job. At her new job, she has been working for twelve years. She expressed her satisfaction with all the components of her work, especially the relationships with her co-workers.

Lena's second pregnancy was an unplanned event in many aspects. It was the time when her husband and she just started to feel more or less comfortable in their job situations, if not financially, but more confident. The security was still shaky. She was thirty-five years old, which she considered to be old for conceiving and carrying a healthy child. Her older son was twelve at the time. For Lena to put herself in a situation of a mother of a newborn again, was to subscribe to too many untimely changes in her routine. But again, she expressed tremendous happiness about the birth of her second son. She never gets tired from enjoying her time with him, even though

she complained intensely about the general lack of time, and more specifically, about a very short maternity leave in the US.

Lena described very few milestones in her sons' increasing independence, but she conveyed a sense of them as socially precocious high-functioning individuals struggling and succeeding through age-appropriate stages of separation-individuation. Both of them had difficulties with initial school transition, which, apparently, was handled by her in a gentle and understanding manner. She described her older son as an exceptionally good student throughout all his school years, getting into and succeeding at a competitive public school. She felt that his success was only partially due to his natural intellectual aptitude, but mostly it depended on his "snobbish" attitude where he felt it was a disgrace not to know or to be not as good as somebody else. Lena proudly mentioned her role in developing this attitude in him. She hoped to install in him an understanding that he has to rely only on himself to get what he wants out of his life.

Lena described her older son's abrupt, yet needed steps toward independence when he was twelve years old and her younger son was born. It was a period when she was not able to spend much time with him. He started to travel independently and to spend almost the whole day away from home, first in school and then in after-school activities. Also, at that time her husband, who has always been, according to her, a devoted father, overtook a parental role even to a larger extent with their older son. They spent a lot of time together, doing chores but also spending free time in each other's company. Her husband promised "to take the younger one away from her, too, when his time comes" in order to disperse some of her female influence.

Lena described a significant, mostly positive, change in her relationship with her older son when he moved out for college a year ago. She stopped worrying about his coming home late. Instead, she felt completely content with his phone calls warning her not to call him at his place, because he was going to be late. She felt more confident about him driving a car because he became more experienced. Lena remembered nudging him to introduce her to his steady girlfriend, which he had done reluctantly. She felt annoyed by some components of their relationship, but all in all, she approves on her son's social and personal life. Even though he lives separately now, she feels that

they are still very connected, him being as attuned as always to her emotional states. They call each other several times a day.

Lena's description of many aspects of her life was saturated with constant flow of comparisons of social system here, in the US, and in the FSU. This theme became especially prominent around the topic of school system, which was somewhat relevant to her current experience with her younger son. He is in the second grade in an accelerated program. Lena feels equally frustrated with the academic portion of the school program, which she described as inadequate and overwhelming at the same time; and also with the social component of it, which she perceives as promoting loneliness and betrayal of friends. She blamed school system for being too demanding of young children while, in the FSU, children of the same age were given space and time to play freely and to enjoy their childhood. Lena described an incident where her seven-year old son was about to be reprimanded for forgetting his homework assignment. Both she and her husband took his side and accused the teacher of setting a non-age appropriate task for the boy of keeping track of all his belongings. In general, she feels that regardless of the content of the incident, her husband always takes children's side.

Again and again in the interview, Lena kept coming back to the contrast of the two countries where her experience in the FSU was invariably better, more satisfying in some regards. Not one theme discussed in the interview was spared this comparison. School system, the system of social compensations, the institute of real estate, and donation system would be an abbreviated list of offending topics. However, it is important to notice that all these comparisons involved anonymous "system", and not particular individuals. On the level of personal, human connections, Lena mentioned with fondness many members of her immediate and extended family, her friends in both countries, her co-workers, and her clients. However, she concentrated more on the role of those people in her life rather than their personality features.

## Lena's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes

### "I live in the present"

#### Leitmotiv

Do you have your favorite vase? You just put flowers in it, and suddenly it broke into little pieces. You cried, you were upset, and you don't have it any more. You just don't. It is the same thing [with emigration]. They say only males can block their thought processes. Not true, females can, too. ...I just pushed away that block, that piece, far to the background – that element of life. (P. 15)

(Have you ever –hypothetically- thought about the way your life could have gone if you were to stay in the FSU?) I never compare. I can't. How can I? If I stayed over there, maybe I would be dead already. How would I know? I can't answer this question. (P.17)

It seems like I raised ten [children] – I am so exhausted. Psychologically, physically...(You think this exhaustion is a result of raising them?) I don't know, maybe it is a combination of everything. (P.30)

(Can you divide your immigration experience, especially at the beginning, into some stages or distinctive periods?) One continuous dread. [Laughing] (P.40)

Lena articulated so powerfully her way of dealing with, or rather defending against, painful feelings by blocking them from her consciousness. She chunked her reality along temporal dimension so that only present tense was accessible to her feelings and everything else was not. Therefore, only factual comparison was possible for her, and not processual, where she could have a look at the different states of her mind or her relationships. She employed the defense of compartmentalization extensively, both in the content and in the structure of her narrative, which created an amazing effect of continuous discontinuity. Her story, even though without any apparent breaks, was held together only by the virtue of her style of narrating and not by the stream of content. My difficulties, as an interviewer, can be compared to those of a publisher who is asking a master of a short story to write something similar to "War and Peace".

Another prominent feature of Lena's narrative was ever-present yet far at the background indiscriminative pain and exhaustion, which she touches upon in the last two quotes. At times, her suffering moved so rapidly to the foreground as if operator's

camera took an unexpected close shot. Because of her perpetual use of this particular defense quite accessible at times to her consciousness with no back up provided by another defense(s), and because of her psychic pain being so ever present and profound, Lena's construction of reality was similar to building a house of cards. My task, then, became to learn as much as possible about this construction without disturbing its shaky equilibrium.

## Transitions

### Transition into parenthood

(How did the decision to have a child come about?) It is an interesting decision. It was not decided. We had known each other for such a long time at the moment of his birth, and we were married for four years...Somehow it just happened. ...I waited to finish college, because I understood that I wouldn't do it with a child. My parents couldn't help me, they worked. (P.5)

The phrase "making a decision" presupposes to an extent the process of thinking through. Lena, in a space of five lines, denied the decision-making process and, at the same time, revealed careful planning which involved taking into account her educational plans, her inability to combine two consuming roles, and the lack of external resources.

(When you think about motherhood, what comes to mind?) I consider motherhood to be the most amazing miracle that can happen to a woman. At least, for me. Birth of a child is an ideal state. What Americans call happiness – this is it. You know, I only had experienced this state of pure joy twice. Well, marriage, yes, it is a joyful event, but it was not such an emotional shock for me. But birth of a child – that, I think, is a shock state. For me. (P.6)

(When did you start as a mother?) I can't answer this question. I can't. ...Motherhood doesn't start with the birth of a child, motherhood starts when you want this child, probably. When you want to give birth, when you want to conceive, when you understand that you need him.... Maybe it started for me ... I had this doll, when I was little, named Alex. ...With blue eyes...I considered it to be my baby, I mothered it. You gonna be laughing how everything repeats itself. When my older child was born, he was an exact copy of that doll. With long dark hair...Except for his eyes. (P.7)

This was by far the most positively loaded and the least conflicted theme in the whole interview. Lena not only expresses unequivocal joy, she also traced roots of it

into her childhood history of preparing herself to the role of a mother. She alluded several times to her happy and content childhood which was enriched by her nurturing relationships with her parents. These relationships probably created the solid base for her ability to re-create love and nurturance in her immediate family.

(When you left your work, did you think you were not coming back?) I knew I wasn't coming back. My husband told me that I couldn't go back, because, if I wanted a child, I had to be with a child. (How did you take his words?) Terrifically. ...I was ready to trade substantial income for the birth of a healthy baby. (What was the origin of your concerns that you have mentioned several times? .... Was it because there were real problems?...Or was it mostly because you knew what could go wrong?) The more you know, the less you sleep. ...Teacher's College... Yes, this scare was probably because of the knowledge. (P.8)

I cried every day (during pregnancy). Because my belly was so huge. They told me that I had twins. ...*Ultrasound* was not a routine procedure. I cried hysterically: "How am I supposed to deal with twins? I don't know how to handle one baby." I was scared out of my mind. When this thought eventually settled down... they did an *ultrasound* and told me that I have one [child], only big. I cried so hard, because I already made peace with the thought of having twins...

He was so huge when he was born, so comical, like a three-month old. (P.8)

In these quotes Lena described a constant level of anxiety regarding the normality of a child and her ability to handle what was on her plate. In spite of her healthy pregnancy and family support, Lena experienced serious emotional turmoil. She was able to illustrate this turmoil with examples, yet it was difficult for her to put it into the context of her life without my extensive prompting.

Lena had troubles describing herself in any way before the birth of the first son, so I had to ask her about concrete activities she was involved with at that period of time.

A year and a half I spent at school [teaching older youth working towards their GEDs]. ...All of them [students] were normal people, just older. They were pariahs of a system. (How did you feel about this work?) I don't know whether I liked it; it was difficult. It is difficult to be a Soviet teacher. You're supposed to spend more time at school than at home. You're supposed to be devoted to your occupation, to your class, to your children. To your students, not to your own child. On the other hand, my school was more or less decent. My former classmates in college – they worked in the regular schools, now that was impossible! The students there were crazy, their parents – double crazy. (P.7)

In this quote, at least three tendencies are important. Lena pinpointed lack of satisfaction with her occupation. She did not describe it as an acute dissatisfaction, but one is able to observe the trend, which started from her college being chosen mostly by her parents, and not by her. The same trend would eventually lead Lena to change her occupation in the US.

Even though Lena did not profess excitement about her work in general, she did not dislike the students or their parents that she had worked with directly. On the contrary, she was rather empathic with their opposition to the “system,” and being good, normal people at the same time. In a way, she and her students were by the same side of a barricade. The question is, who or what was by the other side of the barricade? And again, we can search for hints of the answer in the same quote. Lena mentioned her students being “pariahs of the system”, fine people who were off-track from the Soviet educational structure for various reasons. She herself expressed dissatisfaction with this structure for pressing her to spend too much time and effort at work. Even though she mentioned it several times, the structure, or “the system,” remains impersonal and vague. She also alluded to her former college classmates’ students being “crazy and their parents – double crazy”. It seems that those individuals mentioned negatively were as distant, vague and impersonal for Lena, as “the system” was, thus creating a fertile ground for generalization and, possibly, projection.

#### First son; early childhood transitions

(How he was as a baby?)... He ate everything that was given to him...When I was spoon-feeding him, and the spoon went down for food, there was this awful moment, he screamed. The flow was supposed to be continuous, the spoon working like a boob. [Laughing] There were no problems. Except he did not sleep.... After a while, he started to sleep, they all do. I do not know why he didn't sleep.(P.9)

He was so sensitive...Even when he slept in his stroller, I couldn't go to a store for a minute leaving him with my friends. That very same minute he would wake up and start to scream. Not one child screamed that way. He was so attuned to me. (P.12)

We could question not the level of attunement described by Lena, but the source of it. There was a chance that she ascribed to her baby perceptiveness and attunement that she herself experienced. This, well-described in the attachment literature phenomenon

of affect attribution on the earlier stages of parent-child relationships, might have had an excessive quality in Lena's relationship with her first-born because of the ever-present anxiety on her part. In spite of that, there was an apparent high degree of acceptance she exhibited concerning the baby's needs and habits.

(Describe yourself when he was about year and a half.) ...I was in high spirits, under slept, constantly sleep deprived.... I had, I kept all my friends from college and from school. We spent time together.  
...Everybody visited me, played with the baby...We had normal life; we visited each other, celebrated birthdays together. You know, this typical Soviet way of life. (P.10)

This is the only instance, out of many attempts, when Lena was able to describe herself as multi-dimensional with very little prompting. Even though we cannot compare one self-description to another, only presence of it to its absence, it still provides us with important information.

On other occasions, she spoke about a separate impression from something or about a particularly vivid memory. Here, she was able to summarize, to bring certain level of generalization and abstraction into her musing about what she was like and what her life was like at a certain period. Even though it seems to be restricted to a specific time-period, I would argue that, in order to be able to do that, Lena had to use temporal dimension in a flexible way, comparing and contrasting different periods of her life.

I went to work at a movie studio for three days a week. ...My mom retired by that time so she was with the boy. (That was the only reason, or were there other reasons for you to start working then?) I wanted to do it by then, simply for myself. It was getting hard. Even though it was very difficult for him. He took it in with so much trouble. Terribly. I would come home from work – he shut the door in my face, “You go away.” He cried behind the door, I cried outside, he wouldn't let me in. ...He never used a pacifier, ever. But when I started to work, he found a toy pacifier and started to suck on it. He got rid of it soon, but it was so much for him. We had that constant struggle for a couple of months, but life is life. It was a necessary move; otherwise I wouldn't be able to tear him away later. I actually did not succeed in it. At four, I put him in day-care, and it was such a tragedy for him, so much tears. One should not do it, should not glue the children to oneself. ...Maybe they feel love; they feel that you give everything to them. Plenty of kids are fine in separation. My older one cried terribly, at five he cried all day in day-care. He was like that, what one can do? (P.11)

In both quotes, Lena demonstrated a good understanding of the need to separate and individuate for their common benefit. She acknowledged the necessity of the process and

the difficulties involved in it. The only aspect, apparently, lacking in her retrospective analysis of the situation is an attempt to grasp individual characteristics of her son, which would enable her and us to have a better understanding of the amplitude of his reactions.

First stage of immigration: decision-making

From the maternity leave I came back not to the school, I went to the movie studio. I went there because I had very good friends over there; he was a *make-up artist*. ...In addition, we started to talk about emigration; it was in the air. ... We knew that we were going to apply for visas; and I needed to acquire...I knew that I was not going to be a schoolteacher. (In the US?) Yes, or in Israel. We did not know for sure that it was going to be America. Anyway, I understood that I needed to get something new.  
(P.10)

Historically, this was the first time Lena vaguely mentioned emigration in general terms. Even though, in this particular quote, Lena conceptualizes her change of occupation in light of the preparation to make the move, in other quotes she conveyed complete lack of the preparation in anything else.

(How did the decision to emigrate come about?) I didn't make it. It was my husband's, it was his decision; he wanted to emigrate for a long time. He understood that there was no future in that country. Then we got this opportunity to emigrate. We did not think we would be able to do it...because of his professional and study field.... So it was my husband's decision, I just followed him and the family. (P.1)  
(You're saying that your husband was tired from the communist system?)  
Yes, he was. I somehow...I did not hate that system. I did not like it, but I could accept it. Maybe he knew it better. [Laughing] I had a good life. Nobody discriminated against me. Nor did they do against him...In my twenty-eight years there I'd never experienced anti-Semitism on my own skin. ...Speaking of it, what about here?! Is there no anti-Semitism in this country, is that so? Russia can learn it from the US. The other day I told my client that only once I have heard about someone vandalizing Jewish graveyard in Ukraine. Here [in the US] it happens every month! I am saying to her, "Wake up. Look at your own country. Because you just judge what happens elsewhere." (P.14)

(Did you explain to your son about the emigration?) You know, he didn't ask. My husband, he always tells my son more than he needs to.... I didn't, I couldn't add anything to that because of my passive role in it [emigration]. (P.13)

Lena's description of the decision-making process was congruent with the notion of inactivity on her part. She managed to separate herself from, both the affective part of

the experience, and from the cognitive component of it. This could have an expression of, for example, being worried about the future in another country. Lena's usage of comparisons is remarkable, which she claimed she could not do earlier concerning her life in two countries. Here, she did it without any prompting in reaction to her husband's alleged dissatisfaction with the idealized Russia. Her comparison has factual (rather than process oriented) and vague in character, when she compares some abstract entities with which she had not have any direct interactions.

It is like euphoria – something is coming, somebody is moving somewhere, or, I should say, everybody is going. We are going, too. We do not know where we are going, but we know for sure – it's going to be better over there. All of it was like a soap bubble for me. (So you felt that...) To tell you the truth, I didn't feel anything. I felt we needed to live through that period and be gone. I did not believe, I was ninety-five percent sure that we would not be able to leave. (P.1)

My perception of the US [while still in Russia] was like utopia. From people's letters...from magazine 'America'. .... Naïve perceptions. ...I personally thought highly about the US, starting from political and business systems. What I found here during these fourteen years completely destroyed, ruined that perception. What did we know before? We've read Dresser's 'American tragedy'...I was moving into absolute unknowingness. And because I didn't believe that we would immigrate, I had never studied the language. I knew German almost perfectly. (P.2)

The bitterness and pain of the second quote stands in sharp contrast to the first quote, where, Lena's usage of the present tense and the chanting quality of her speech pattern creates a trance-like state. So that both, the form and the content of the first quote can be described as self-inflicted anesthesia that Lena experienced at the stage of the decision-making.

#### Second stage of immigration: leaving-arrival

At that time, you probably remember, they still took away our citizenship. We left barefoot, so to speak. We had ninety dollars per person. It was scary [smiling], that unknowingness, lack of money, and three suitcases. (P.1)

All my Russian friends helped me through the hassle; they all saw me off warmly. All of them were so supportive. (What about leaving L. as a city?) I left so calmly. I understood that I was not going to see it again. Therefore it is necessary to tear away this part, like from a picture. I knew

for sure I shouldn't have any illusions, I don't have a house, and I don't have anything. I knew for myself that otherwise I wouldn't be able to start from a scratch, if I had a house left and have a place to come back to. I did not have the past. (Pp.14-15)

This particular defense of compartmentalization along the temporal dimension, was very extensively used by Lena in the above-described period. Apparently, this defensive strategy was not serving its role of blocking off anxiety. By screening out her past and her future, she was left to live in the very unsettling present, the moment of leaving, which is transient by definition. Her slipping from the past to the present tense in her grammar was especially frequent around stressful moments indicating that this defense does not allow even for partial working through the pain thus forcing her to continuously encounter pockets of pain.

I had only negative emotions; I didn't have any emotions concerning my life here, but only negative emotions concerning the language, language barrier. That was horrible, just awful. It felt as if I would never be able to learn it, to comprehend it. I turned on radio on my husband's encouragement, and English was for me like a stream of water from the facet, the same thing. (P.18)

When I came here, my son started his *alphabet in kindergarten* and I started with him. That period was totally horrible. (For how long did it last?) It still does. I mean, I can communicate. But if your psychological mentality allows you to... Well, my Russian is perfect so that I want to communicate in English the same way as in Russian. It is never going to happen. This gap between yearning and the existing skill creates this deep hole. (P.2)

The theme of Lena's inability to acquire language is one of the two most prominent throughout the interview (the second one is a child's loneliness in the American society, which I will illustrate with later examples). One can argue that it is a displacement of her frustration with other components of herself and her external reality that found its reflection in language problem. Her metaphor for the language barrier as "a stream of water from the facet" could have brought hope for someone else. Water, unlike a wall for example, seems to be penetrable. In my own narrative, I compared being exposed to another language with swimming in the water that is a little too cold to be completely comfortable. This temperature discomfort brings a level of linguistic awareness lacking in my native language. For Lena, her metaphor expressed an utter discomfort and lack of meaning in another language. From that perspective, her saying that this issue is still very relevant and the fact that she never had mentioned any intermediate stage of her

language acquisition tells us that this problem became encapsulated for her in some static form.

During my second day [in the country] I went to enroll myself in a language class. They showed me that spot on a map where I was and where Columbia University was. And go ahead. I have goose bumps as I am recalling it now. I am not sure now how I got there then; at the very end, some guy just walked me there. ...So they gave me that test, and a man sat with me asking all those questions. I was looking at him and thinking, "I have never experienced that much shame in my entire life." I had only five words [in her English vocabulary]. It was awful (P. 19)

So much immaturity and shame when I had to deal with hassles of everyday Western style of life. The bank gives you a card with which you're supposed to take out money. But how do you get to the bank, how do you put your card in a machine and where do you sign. ...Who are you? What are you? You're nothing. You're nothing. You do not have any language; you do not have any knowledge. How you are going to live this life... (P.18)

In this quotes we are getting a close look at the Lena's trauma of the first months of immigration. We can only speculate about the reasons for that experience to be perceived in such a traumatic way by her. The lack of initiative during the time of the decision to immigrate and the almost absolute language barrier served as complicating factors in the process, but they do not explain the amplitude of Lena's reported suffering. For example, another participant, Uri, acknowledged his complete bewilderment during the first few days in the country, also concentrated on the enjoyment of being led by someone else. Yet another participant, Anna, complained about being overwhelmed but loved jumping into kaleidoscopic details of the new neighborhood. Lena's feelings of being reduced into the nothingness by the challenges of immigration, and the extent of her narcissistic injury can, at least partially, be explained by her defensive present time concentration, when she could not project herself into the future as a more competent human being, and, possibly, could not even use her past self-concept of a capable adult.

#### First son: latency transitions

I never helped him [with his homework]. Maybe I helped him with some projects, little things. ...Started to help him with math, whatever I could explain, like *fractions*, the way I taught it. But they have it slightly different here. So I dropped it and told him that I was afraid to twist his perception of local math, because we had it differently. And I stopped. But

he didn't need extensive help because they had different school program back then [compared to her younger son's program]. (P.32)  
I did not control him. I told him, "You are supposed to do it on your own," and he did it that way. (P.32)

These are the only two quotes directly mentioning the seven-year period of Lena's first son's life (from the age five to twelve). Both quotes tell us substantially more about the mother herself than about the boy's personality and development. Even though in her mind the boy was able to function on his own seemingly at every domain, the only evidence she presented to us were her own internal fears and limitations. A math teacher in the recent past, she was afraid to teach him incorrectly, as if her feelings of being inept and incompetent as an immigrant spread and made her inadequate in her professional subject as well. She perceived her husband and herself as lacking the ability to provide solid basis for her older son's successful future, thus relinquishing herself and putting this responsibility onto the boy. According to her, he managed to become successful and effective in this task. The question remains about the cost for him becoming independent in response to his mother's needs, not to his own.

#### Next stage of immigration: settling down

After completing my Language classes, I got myself into a Beauty School... All my family mocked me, they never believed I was going to do it with my Masters in Math and Teaching. Everybody else went into computers. We had Yellow Pages in my Language class. We had a conversation with my classmates about our future plans, and I told them about Beauty School. This funny guy from L. told me that he was going to pick a school for me. He picked the X because it was the closest one. He and I went there together; he helped me to pass the entrance exam the same day. (P.20)

While in school, I went to work in a large department store as a salesgirl. It gave me a lot in terms of spoken language. ...All my life, I was lucky with people – there were so many excellent people who helped me. Nobody mocked me, nobody laughed at me. I think, Americans are very tolerant, at least in New York. In other places people perceive immigrants differently. After completing school, I went to work in a pleasant small saloon. The hours were not good for me. ...So I went to work with R. and I am with him for almost twelve years. (P.21)  
I knew that I was going to do something [professionally in a new country] that at least would bring me psychological satisfaction. I like it; it is

mine... You know, when you cook something with love, it turns out to be tasty. (P.21)

In these quotes, Lena displayed a resolution for her long-standing professional dissatisfaction. Even though the execution of it may have looked somewhat impulsive, the resolution was well grounded in her previous experience. Presently, her occupation constitutes an area of fulfillment and provides her with a sense of agency among the vast territory of discontent of her immigrant life. And again, it is worth noticing the way Lena mentioned the people that she was in direct contact with during the first steps of immigration. Her description has very positive abstract character. In order to sustain this positive attitude, she, as in the other above-mentioned quotes, has to contrast it immediately with somebody or something distant and negative. In this way, she is able to maintain an image of positive homogeneity of her objects by evacuating and displacing negativity onto not-her objects.

I had those dreams about L [city], every night I saw L's streets. It began when I started to settle down here. Before that I had zero emotions. And then the streets began to float to the surface in my dreams. And not because I was thinking about them. I didn't even like those streets. (What did you feel when you woke up?) Normal, good. There was absolutely nothing like, "Oh, I miss something.." (P.15)

The extent of splitting off the affective component of Lena's experience is remarkable. So well-described in literature on immigration, and so intimately familiar to many immigrants is a phenomenon of longing for their country of origin, which comes after the initial period of immigration settles down. Lena experienced it as a chain of dreams, completely disconnected from her emotional state. Other participants, like Uri for example, initially reacted with negation and disbelief onto their feelings of longing, but came to terms with them a little later when it felt safer. Lena's negation of these feelings seems to increase over the years.

(Could you describe yourself at that period of time? [about eight years ago]) It is difficult to answer this question. [I probe] A state of foolishness. [laughing] Because there is not enough time for anything. You run in circles with no beginning and no end. I have this yearning for Russian literature. I want to read something decent, but there is not enough time, not enough information... This is grueling a little. Other than that everything is okay. (P.41)

Lena is utterly unable to reflect on her emotional state at different stages of immigration. Her drive to keep everything disconnected and in the present time did not

allow her to sustain even one sentence in the past tense. Her metaphor of “running in circles” is very poignant in terms of lacking the past or the future, and having only the present moment at her disposal. She was able to acknowledge her longing for at least one component of Russian culture, which could be a representation of its other components.

Birth of the second son; transition into adolescence of the first son

(How did you make a decision about the number of children?) There was no decision; I didn't want the second child.... We didn't plan it. We didn't have any substantial income. We needed to educate the first one; we had to climb up to a certain level.... Also I was thirty-five, so I was afraid he was going to be born not healthy. Eggs were so old. [Smiling] I went to my ob/gyn with a notion of abortion in mind...I also told my husband not to have his hopes up. ...It was so hard. My dad just died recently... We decided to keep the baby, thanks God. It is such happiness; such an amusing baby was born. (P.22)

Childhood over there [in the FSU] is much better than here. I could be with my child for eighteen months; here I had to go back to work when he was ten weeks old. Everything is more concentrated in here. In those three-four days with him, I had to include everything I needed to give him in a week. I had to work, to cook, to spend time with my older one, with my younger one, with my dog. And with my husband sometimes. It's awful what a hasty life is in here.... As if I don't live, I just uh-hu [makes a sliding noise] through it...(P.40)

Lena perceived her second pregnancy as a major interruption of an already hectic and difficult life. Possibly a reaction to the loss of her father, this pregnancy also stirred up her old anxiety of the unknown origin about normality of the baby, and difficulties in adjusting to a new situation per say. Her being older than what considered as an optimal childbearing age in the FSU apparently aggravated the situation. The comparison of two countries in terms of circumstances of early childhood has the most elaborate character in Lena's narrative. Comfort of her own childhood and the enjoyment of the early years of her first-born created a safe lagoon, which allowed for the existence of detailed, but possibly for idealized memories, and for the least disrupted and disconnected self-reflection of her internal state.

(This transition from a child into an adolescent – how did it happen?) I am not sure. He suddenly grew up when the second one was born, and I couldn't pay as much attention to him as I used to. He simply had to choose his own way – without mommy and daddy. He started to do

shopping on his own. I never asked him before – there was no need to. ...I think he liked it; he liked me telling him how much I needed his help. (How did you feel?) I was afraid. I kept him by my side all that time before. In this country, the longer you manage to keep your child by your side, the safer you feel. The environment here is so terrible....He was an easy child and teenager, though. ...He had couple of problems at school when he considered some teachers to be not smart enough... In many ways, when the younger one was born, the older one became more on his own. (P.28-29)

We did not see each other much; therefore my husband spent more time with him. (What did they do?) They did shopping together, went to museums,...studied hunting books, read history books....Yes, those years went more under his father's influence. (P. 29)

In her attitude concerning her son's substantial steps towards independence, Lena was able to maintain a complex point of view. She described it, seemingly, as her initiative out of a necessity. At the same time, she pinpointed the good timing of this move, and the boy's appreciation of his newly acquired freedom. In addition, she mentioned that her son has not been left to his own devices, but rather switched hands. We can assume that his father's close guidance was still less close than the mother's was, thus allowing for developmentally appropriate separation. Possibly, because of her ability to see that period of time as a multisided phenomenon, including acknowledging her own fears, Lena did not have to resort to her usual way of compartmentalizing and externalizing negativity onto another object. Only fleetingly, she mentioned a dangerous "environment" without a need to elaborate on that.

(You mentioned that he got into Styvenson, but picked Bronx Science. What was your reaction?) We went to a meeting there and he got scared of ninety five percent Oriental [students]. He always liked a mix, he was used to it...He said, "Mom..." He was used to being the best...Of course, he knew... We went to the Bronx Science, and there was a totally different climate. He said, "I will go there" (You were not against it.) No, I will never be against. He is searching, let him do it. I am not going to be an obstacle on his path...Because it is your child, you can advise him from you subjective point of view, because you want what is best. But you have no right to make decisions for him. It has to be his decision. (P.26) I wanted him to go through this by himself [an incident of broken trust with his friend]. I could not live it through for him. It hurt me a lot to see him go through this, but they [children] have to do it. (P.34) I always taught him to be independent. I was always telling him, "We came here destitute...We are trying to do what we can, but we can't do

more than we can. So you gotta study better than people born here.” He grew up with that.(P.25)

In these two quotes, Lena nicely illustrates her strategy of advising a child and letting him act on his own, armored with her advice. We can speculate about the influence by identification that her narcissistic injury, as an immigrant, might have on her children. However, it appeared that she allowed the separation process to happen, and they have enough room to create their own models of functioning. I would like to contrast this style of letting go to that of another participant, Tanya, where she managed to create a static halfway house between two countries, and inhabited it together with her twenty-two year old daughter from whom she had no intentions of separating in any way.

#### Twelve years in the US: visit to Russia

Every time my friends in L. would take me somewhere, they would ask me if what I saw had touched me. No, it did not. As if I was looking at Eiffel Tower in Paris: I’ve seen it a million times on pictures; now I am seeing it live. The same impressions. I didn’t find an old L. ...I did not look for it...Nothing touched a chord. On the plane, I had that scary feeling that you can’t go back into your past emotionally. ...I could have not gone by the same token, but friends insisted, they wanted to brag... Although they had their hats off for us [immigrants] who survived. I think they had to survive more, they were shot at, and we weren’t. (P.17)

The demarcation line of twelve years in Lena’s narrative was very arbitrary. For the reason that there were no indications of change in anything related to immigration after an initial stage, I picked Lena’s visit to Russia because she had a chance to revisit her feelings for the country left behind. She was surprised by the complete emptiness of her trip. Her emotions for the past were not dead; they were non-existent. Similarly to clinical complaints of patients afflicted by different form of schizophrenia, Lena knew that she was supposed to feel something for the city, for the past she spent there, but there were no feelings at all. Such an extreme form of compartmentalizing seems to be similar to what happens to a limb when you completely cut off the blood flow to it. Even though I would argue that initially, not like in a case of splitting, Lena had an ability to visit consciously her emotional memories about her culture and her city, she did not experienced a need to do it. After a while, this particular pocket became empty, possible irretrievably empty, to an extent that she became scared of this apparent lack.

Lena's current relationships with her children: early adulthood transition; early latency stage

(When he started college and moved out – how was it for you?) Hard at the beginning, but then – I enjoyed it. [smiling] I do not know what exactly he is doing – so I am not worried sick. ...Now I know he is out, I don't have a need to wait by the window. When he first started to drive – a year ago – I was so nervous. Now we both calmed down a little. ...He is fine, he is responsible. (P.36)

I think he is very considerate, he is able to control his emotions really well in terms of the understanding where to show them and where not to. ...Even though he is hot-blooded, too. He swears when he is driving, I asked him not to. He told me off saying that I could drive myself if I wanted to. And he is right [laughing]. He used not to talk back like this. That's his new college era. (P.24)

When his time came, girlfriends appeared. It would be worse if he has not had them. ...I lecture him...I told him to pay that huge bill [describing an episode of him spending a large amount of money talking to his girlfriend long distance]! ...He jokes with his girlfriend in such a way that I would've killed him if I were her. I am asking her, "How come you are so patient with him?" And they laugh together. (P.35-36)

He still is very sensitive. He is in his second year of college, and he still calls me daily, "Mom, how are you feeling?"...He is going to be a good husband for someone, I hope. (P.12)

Psychologically he is not distant from me. He shares a lot. (P.25)

This is the most elaborate description of a transition that occurred in Lena's older son's life. In part, the recency effect accounts for that, as well as Lena's obvious sense of enjoyment while engaged in this transition. Speaking without reservations about her worries and fears, she managed to create a congruent picture of the mother who is able to relinquish gradually, but surely her authority and control, and be fully engaged, in her adult son's life from a somewhat peripheral, advisory position.

I can't kiss him like before [her seven-year old]. Sometimes he would still sit on my lap, but there is no more of that babyish feeling. (P.29)

My little one argues with me...And he is so stubborn! At times I try to convince him, but if it doesn't work – I just let him be. (P.38)

This little brat doesn't eat fruits or vegetables. Once I decided to make him try an apple. [Described an episode of forced feeding.] So, I told myself, God forbid, I do it again; you don't want to eat, then do not eat! The same thing can be said about psychological realm. How can you force onto somebody your understanding of the world? ...He says, "I grow this way. You are different. This is my way." That's how he explains it to us. (P.27)

Lena depicted several classical struggles of an early latency child who is trying to establish his sense of mastery. She was conscious about her desire to continue to enjoy their formerly very close connection, but she also seemed to be quite tolerant of his inclination to ascertain himself as a separate individual.

Even though he is an American, he is more Russian than my older one was at his age. He wants to learn Russian; he told me that he wants to be able to read books that I am reading to him now. (P. 3)

...He is interested in such questions like living and dying...Children are so precocious here. ...They are robbed of their childhood by all this information. We had better childhood. We knew less good things and less bad things. It was better that way. (Pp.22-23)

I, as a mother of a seven-year old, I don't have my own life because I have to follow him everywhere. So their interactions get shaped by parents too much. Poor children! ...Or take a look on the way the classes get mixed every year. They only started to make friends, and again they get jumbled up. That's why they all take drugs. (P.6)

I am troubled by their lonely childhood. These sleepovers, it is such a primitive model of our childhood. They do not interact...They can be nourished only by the family and by TV; they do not take any nourishment from a collective entity of a class, for example. There is no such thing...They are actually told to tell on each other. And then they grow up to do the same at their workplaces. I don't have at my job, but the others do. (Pp.23-24)

While Lena's first son was growing up, she tried to acquire English so anxiously that she pushed away her Russian identifications very abruptly. Apparently, it became replicated in his handling of language. Her younger son's desire for the Russian language may be a reflection of her own growing easy with English, an ease of which she has no awareness, except only through her children. Also, with the increasing comfort in the language realm, she is equipped to interact with the social or school system a little more than she was able to while her first son was growing up. Her younger son's interactions with the world still require her active involvement and control, which she exercises appropriately. However, because his life is so tangled up with the school and she perceives "the system" as a convenient object for projecting her anxieties and dissatisfaction, she constantly slips into generalized criticism of it. What could be perceived as Lena's natural difficulties of a transition from a collectivistic to an individualistic society somehow has not found its reflection in the narratives of the other participants of the study.

Lena's only reflection of the changes that time and maturity brought onto her as a parent was as follows:

(Do you feel the difference?) Of course, it is more difficult physically. Twelve years had passed. You became twelve years wiser. ... This layer of twelve years. More things you know, less you actually can do. (P.40)

Even after an extensive probing, Lena was not able to reflect in more details on this vague sense of change, which is not surprising in light of her defensive organization that does not allow enough fluidity for an analytic process to occur.

#### Current stage of immigration

(How does this gap [between her desire to communicate using perfect English and her inability to do so] influence your life?) It does. There is an influence. You can suppress any feelings from love to hatred. You can suppress the impossible. But you can't jump over you own head. (P.2)

It was almost impossible to find a quote describing Lena's present feelings about herself or her environment as an immigrant without repeating what she said before about the initial stages that continue into present. Therefore, I picked a quote that reflects her understanding of her own defense mechanism used to cope with a constant feeling of discontent, as well as the limitations of this defense mechanism. In order to get in touch with other aspects of her immigration experience, like her sense of life tempo, her relationships with her human surrounding, her perception of society; we simply have to go back to the description of her earlier stages of immigration.

In conclusion, I want to recap a few tendencies that were especially salient in Lena's narrative concerning the process of separating from her children and from her country of origin. There was a sense of well-being related to Lena's relationships with her children regarding the notion of parent-child mutual separation. The only period she was able to describe herself, or to hold on to some continued reflection of herself, (and the change was apparent compared to her description of her professional role before the child was born) was when her first-born was a toddler. She was happy and content; her defenses were down. Afterwards, the notion of immigration with its disturbing and uprooting tendencies came about. Her defenses became denser, her tendencies to temporally slice her reality in order to avoid anxiety became more pronounced, thus

restricting her ability to reflect on changes in her internal state, and, possibly, partially stagnating the process of change itself.

There were definite areas of strength and fluency in Lena's life. Her relationships with her immediate family, children in particular; her ability to exercise appropriate control, and to relinquish it at the right time, served as a crucial role in their separation-individuation process and in her sense of accomplishment in her role of a mother. Even if at times her sense of estrangement leaked through into her ability to help her children to negotiate some of the transitions; she still was overwhelmingly responsive and sensitive to their needs and clues.

Lena described the process of actualizing her desires in her professional field through the sense of dissatisfaction at first, and then through the reactions of others to her more articulated steps toward achieving her goal. She registered changes in herself through their reactions and feedback. We could conceptualize the change of her professional role as an aspect of her immigration experience that gained a particularly positive weight in the whole process. The similarity of the two above-mentioned areas could be based in the presence of an object (children) or an objectified internal state (her professional inclinations) that Lena was able to hold on to and shape her thoughts and feelings accordingly, and to receive feedback in a relatively concrete form.

There was no sense of a *process* of separation from her country of origin, but rather an abrupt cut-off that never became integrated into her sense of who she was in a new country. If anything, that cut-off only deepened and became more extreme with time, as was confirmed by her recent visit to Russia. She often used the term "unknowingness" relating to immigration, which can evoke an image of a lonely ship in the ocean of unfamiliar with no navigating light to follow. In order to navigate that ocean, Lena used the only strategy she knew – she pretended that the mother port never existed.

## **Anna's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Anna emigrated from Russia to New York six years ago at the age of forty-five with her husband and their son. While making the decision to emigrate, she assumed that her extended family – her elderly parents and her brother's family – would follow her. But that did not happen. Her brother's successful career in business was the main factor in his decision to stay in Moscow. Currently Anna lives with her husband of twenty-eight years and their son Victor who recently graduated from college and is looking for a job as a computer programmer. Anna works in the field of social services. In addition, she also has several part-time jobs editing columns in a large Russian newspaper, she also teach music appreciation classes for the elderly in a non-profit organization.

Anna came from a family that was well known in Russian scientific circles. Her father was one of the leading figures in contemporary physics that focused on military defense. Anna described growing up in a somewhat elite atmosphere surrounded by adults, many of whom were well educated in a wide variety of interests. Her family was comparatively well off both in terms of their material resources and their access to cultural assets.

Even though, according to her, she had never had any exceptional abilities in math, her parents insisted on a specialized math school for her. After graduating high school, Anna went to a very prestigious and "hard to get into" Language Arts University which was not only against her parents' preferences but also against common sense. During that period, it was almost impossible for a Jew to get published in the field of comparative literature, let alone to develop a meaningful career in this field. Anna refers to the years spent in the university as the most happy and bittersweet because she always knew that her most joyful experiences would not become a full-fledged profession. After she got her degree, she used her father's connections to get a job in the military institute, where she worked for almost two decades. Her work combined linguistics and computer programming.

At nineteen, Anna started to date her husband-to-be. She did not share much information on their courtship period except that it went in the shadow of his brother's severe mental illness. Her fiancé's parents were devastated, and Anna felt obliged to

share responsibilities of taking care of them well before her relationship with her husband became official.

Anna got married at twenty three. The decision to have children was complicated by her husband's concerns about the genetic transmission of this mental illness. Nevertheless, she got pregnant two times. Both times she had bleeding at the end of the first trimester. The physicians' verdict was that both pregnancies had to be terminated because the fetuses were dead. Medical abortions were performed, during which, it was found that both times the fetuses were still alive. During her third pregnancy, her husband intervened and, even though doctors strongly advised to have an abortion, Anna and her husband decided to take the risks and to continue with the pregnancy. The pregnancy process was both physically demanding and emotionally exhilarating. Anna felt that her existence eventually gained the fullness of meaning. She referred to this experience several times throughout the interview.

Her son, Victor, was a healthy baby; happy and content except for his sleeping patterns that Anna blames on not following her own intuition. Only several times, when she was completely exhausted, she took a nap with him sleeping besides her and nursing. Co-sleeping was strongly discouraged by traditional medicine at that time so she did not implement it into their routine even though it was a beneficial and relaxing experience for her and for her son.

Anna refers to her son's preschool years as the happiest ones. She describes him at that period of time as still very much baby-like in his appearance but linguistically precocious. She felt good about professional level of the preschool he went to. His first grade was under the roof of the same pre-school, so he got the same quality of care, as well as good and creative teachers. Anna ended up working part-time during his pre-school years because Victor was often sick. She felt content about spending a lot of time with him.

Her husband defended his dissertation at the same period of time and worked at a position that, according to Anna, was fulfilling in terms of his career inspirations. Both he and Anna were the main support system for his sick brother and his parents. Anna visited them every week, and her husband visited them more frequently, in addition to his long daily phone conversations with his brother whom he was trying to sooth and

comfort. On the one hand, Anna felt resentful toward her in-laws because they were so immersed in their son's sickness and their own misery that they completely neglected the other son, let alone his family. On the other hand, Anna felt guilty that she took care of them only out of dutiful feelings and not because she was fond of them. She knew that her husband was aware of the way she felt, because, according to her, she was not able to cover it up. One day, when her husband went on a regular business trip, his brother committed suicide. Her mother-in-law had her second stroke that day and died the following week. Anna stated that, until present day, her husband expresses acute guilt for his brother's death; and everything negative that happens in his life afterwards, he perceives, was a punishment for his absence at the time of suicide. Anna and her husband took her father-in-law whose dementia was severely aggravated by the losses, to live with them in their apartment. Victor at 6 years of age became responsible for feeding his grandfather after coming home from school and entertaining him until his parents came home from work.

Anna felt uneasy about their choice of school for Victor after he completed the first grade. The better and more prestigious language and humanities oriented school was the one located across several major intersections. Neither Anna, nor her husband could walk Victor there so they picked a less prestigious math school that was on the same block.

Anna expressed several major regrets about the things she had done in her life. One of them she considers to be her inability to be persistent when expressing her opinions. This character trait, she feels, stems from two sources. First, Anna described her parents as too strong in expressing their opinions and desires when she was growing up. She did not want to repeat the same pattern with her son. Second, because of her belief that every situation has more than one side, she feels she does not have the right to insist strongly on her opinion. Anna speculated about her son not being a strait "A" student in school, in spite of his excellent capabilities, because she did not push him to succeed. According to her, she has not been persistent enough while introducing sports to him either, so now he has weight problems, and less emotional and physical stamina than he could have otherwise.

As a distinctive stage of separation, Anna named Victor's turning eleven and becoming substantially less verbally open with her about his friends, time spent in school, his thoughts, and feelings. Anna kept returning to this milestone in their relationship from different perspectives as his attempt to guard his private world from her. At the same time, as Anna stated, she continued to be a confidante and an advisor for many of Victor's close friends.

At fifteen, Victor went to another country to study for a year as an exchange student. Anna conceptualized this as an achievement not only because he had to go through several notorious examinations in order to win this trip, but also, while in another country, he was able to perform well in school in another language.

Without providing an example to illustrate her point, Anna stated that she started to trust Victor completely at thirteen, when she felt that his opinions and decisions became more informed than hers. Her trust became substantially less absolute in Victor's last years of college, when she observed a series of what she perceived to be bad choices in studying, professional development, and personal relationships. Anna speculated about the nature of this transformation in Victor as rooted in several unfortunate changes in his physical appearance that brought about lowering of his sense of self-worth especially in the presence of the opposite gender. Currently, Anna is concerned both with his professional development and his personal advancements.

Several years prior to their actual immigration in 1997, Anna visited her relatives in New York and worked for six months as a babysitter. When she came home, her husband started out a discussion about the need to immigrate in order to insure their son's future. Even though Anna had serious doubts about the "brightness" of their future in the FSU and felt excited by new cultural and professional opportunities in the US, she expressed vital concerns about their, and her husband in particular, abilities to adjust without her extended family's support and connections. Nevertheless, the decision to emigrate was finalized.

Within several months after their immigration, Anna's husband became critically ill and had to undergo surgeries and extensive treatment. Anna had to generate the family income. She found several part-time jobs as a journalist, and also she started to teach a

variety of professional classes for immigrants in the organization that provided continuing education. Meanwhile, Victor had finished high school and went to the college of his choice that ranked high in the area of computer science and was relatively close to home. He visited his parents every weekend. Anna noted that he was hesitant in choosing his major, oscillating between philosophy, history, and computer science.

After several years of struggling with his illness, her husband recovered almost completely. He decided to try out a new, narrow area in computer programming and took an intensive course, which he finished as the best student in his large class. He was invited to work as a professor's assistant but soon after the course became under-enrolled and his position was eliminated.. All his efforts to find a job in the area of computer programming and math appeared to be fruitless. He initiated several unsuccessful attempts to establish small commercial business using his existing connection in Russia. Presently, he spends a substantial amount of time in Russia where, according to Anna, he feels he is able to accomplish something. Anna resents this set up, both out of a sense of mistrust toward Russian businesses and because he spends many months away from his family. At the same period of time, Anna has been invited to work as a service coordinator for a large organization. At first, she perceived this new development only as an opportunity to improve her family income and to help others, which she felt was something she has always done for free.

Working currently in this capacity, Anna recognizes this as being her most fulfilling work experience in many ways, including professional advancement and an opportunity to interact with many creative and highly-trained professionals of varied cultural backgrounds. While satisfied professionally, she personally feels unsettled about certain issues in her immediate family. In a variety of ways, she feels responsible for the emotional wellbeing of those close to her. Therefore, she considers her son's difficulties related to his transition into the adult world, and her husband's inability to adjust and be professionally successful in the new country, as her personal failures.

**Anna's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes**  
**“Mind-set of a crazy Jewish mother where I see everybody as my children”**

**Leitmotiv**

(If you were to write two stories with the same main character. In one of them this main character is childless and in the other one she has children. How these two stories would be different?) Absolutely different...I wonder why I am so stuck in this absolute certainty that people have to have children. Why do I experience such an acute sense of unbearable and bitter pity while looking at someone childless? Who said that people have to have children? There are people out there who do not love them. Some do not have them, do not love them, and do not want them. Even feel certain repulsion toward children. Why does my ferocious desire to have children, a desire that had not been satisfied for many years, force me to personificate it with everybody else? Could it be a delusion or a mind-set of a crazy Jewish mother where I see everybody as my children? A tiny bit. Only this much. Any kind of a story, long or short, about a childless woman is a tragedy to me. (P. 29)

(If you compare immigration to a journey, what kind of journey would it be?) Climbing, hiking uphill, a steep path in the forestry hill, worn-down blood-blistered feet. Breaks to find water and start campfire. You're carrying a rucksack, and you're pulling the children uphill. You're entertaining those around you so that they wouldn't collapse from exhaustion. .... One has to go, one has to search for food and cook that food, and one has to put up that tent. I cannot imagine stopping in this journey. ...I just long for some intermediate high points where I could both feel the accomplishment and see my family by my side at the same high point. And then to go on... (P. 36)

Anna's sense of profound responsibility for everyone close or not that close to her is a prominent theme throughout the interview. In her relationship with her son, this sense reaches its apotheosis. Seemingly, she is willing to acknowledge their separation if everything goes “smoothly” for him. She gladly recognizes his ownership of his achievements. Anna enjoys her son's small victories and accomplishments through her identification with him, but there is an appreciation of boundaries between them. The situation changes radically when he goes through some difficult time.

Somehow I am not qualified as a normal woman; there is not enough womanly manifestation in me, internally or externally.... And I am punished for that through my family members' unhappiness. ... Let's say, if I were enough of a woman – an attractive young woman, a meticulous

housekeeper – I would've married more successfully. ...Insuring my children' future both genetically and financially. (P. 18)

This is the most general, yet all-embracing remark about her profound irrational sense of guilt about everything negative that happens to or around her son. Under stress, the boundaries between them melt, buried under her overwhelming sense of responsibility and guilt. Her feeling of guilt grows and “matures” together with her son, assuming different expressions but persisting through all stages of his development, as I will demonstrate later on. While renouncing more direct ways of influencing him, it is plausible that she unconsciously chooses to exploit his secondary identification with her guilty feelings. This can serve as a mean to exercise strong though indirect influence over him.

### **Transitions**

#### Transition into parenthood

(How did you make the decision to have children?) The illness of his older brother, and the fact that their parents were completely depleted, destroyed by the horror of this illness... All of it placed such fear into my husband; fear that it can happen to him, can be transmitted genetically to his own children. He was afraid to think about it. (P.2)

Throughout the interview, Anna referred many times to the effect that her husband sibling's mental illness and death had on her husband.

In this particular example, she suggested that it played a major role in his initial hesitancy about having children. However, this suggestion, according to her, is based more on her intuitive understanding of her husband, rather than on his disclosure of his feelings on the matter. It was her “impression” that he breathed out a sigh of relief, when she had her first miscarriage because of the medical mistake. It is difficult to imagine that the evidence of severe mental illness in her husband's family had no affect on Anna herself in terms of her child planning. The fact that she mentioned only her husband's constant worry about this matter allows one to assume a rather defensive nature of this phenomenon on Anna's part. The decision to have only one child could also be affected implicitly by the family history, but Anna excluded this consideration from her musings about this decision.

When the same thing happened to me the second time around, I was doubtful about the abortion. Nevertheless, the doctors insisted that I was going to get sepsis, and that the fetus was dead. And again, it was alive. That is why the third time around, I said “no”, I better be dead myself, I could not stand it any more. Then my husband, who really wanted a child badly but was afraid, decided to try and keep the baby. It should be said that the baby came out beautifully. He was big; he was chubby, with a smile. With such wise eyes. (P.3)

Even though Anna had such a tremendous yearning for a child, she needed her husband's approval and a confirmation of his own desire to have a baby. Especially in a situation when she had to go against the authority of medical world. Only after the baby was born and she survived the pregnancy, was it possible to establish the inaccuracy of that medical opinion.

For a long time I could not believe that I have a child. That is why at night I used to peep into his crib to assure myself that it was not a dream, but a real baby. (P.4)

Life was empty before he (her son) came about. Not actually before he was born, but before his birth became possible. When I got pregnant, everything immediately fell into place. Pregnant, vomiting, whatever... Writing poetry, taking a walk, sitting on senseless business meeting.... Life was full to its limits; every second was momentous and beautiful. (P.30)

I think that here we encounter the first moment when the leitmotif of a “crazy Jewish mother” reaches its highest and purest form. Never before was Anna so ultimately needed, never before her body was so ‘properly used’ as a container, and never before was her sense of belonging to another human being filled to such an extent. The only chance for Anna to experience such depth and intensity was through her relationship to her child and not to another adult, her husband for instance. This fullness had found its reflection in her sense of herself and her inspirations. In classical literature, one can come across many instances when “falling in love” goes along with the upsurge of creative activity.

I had such an incredible explosion of creative inspiration right after Victor was born. I have never experienced that, not before, not after. Thoughts I had, thoughts, ideas! Poems... I started to paint again...(Why do you think it happened then?) The only explanation that I can think of is that my child was my first true love. I've never experienced such feelings before. I care a lot about my husband. After all those years, I really love him...but even

then I already knew that there was nothing exclusive about it. That there were others I could've married. (P.7)

### Preschool-early school years

(Which period of Victor's growing up you have enjoyed the most?)  
Probably... from three to four. When he already was able to talk magnificently but still had this baby-like appearance, like a toy Winnie-the-Pooh. And what gave me an immense pride – is that he was able to ride his bicycle, mastery that I myself was never able to achieve... We were together a lot. Also he went into a preschool and it was nice. He had warm relationships with other kids. They had a great teacher; it was a very productive time. In addition, my husband defended his dissertation then... It was such a high point in many ways. (P.24)

A feeling of happiness emanates from this quote. Anna seems to be the most content at this period of time. Her child is no longer an infant, requiring sleepless nights, but he is still very young and very much “hers.” He exhibits features of a well-developing child; she derived pride from his skills and abilities. Her husband was doing well, which was important to her because she extended her sense of responsibility onto all members of her immediate family.

(How did you feel when Victor went to school?) I felt great. His first grade was on the premises of his preschool. It was the most productive year. His progress was very substantial. ...Only later we stepped on a path of compromises, which was both my husband's fault and mine. We moved in with my husband's father into a larger apartment. There was a math school right near this place, but if you cross several large intersections, there was a much better language school. We put Victor in the math school so that we did not have to walk him there, which was a definite compromise. (P. 14)

When my husband's father lost both his older son and his wife within two-week period, we took him in to live with us. He was eighty-three and completely demented. Our son obtained very specific responsibilities, even though he was only six. Every day after school he had to feed and entertain his grandfather while waiting for his mommy to sprint home from work. For that year and a half, the child became an older brother for his grandfather. (P.5)

Usually, a substantial step on a road of separation – a child's going into elementary school, - Anna perceived with pleasure and acceptance concentrating on Victor's progress in a favorable environment. He walked to school on his own and stayed home alone. She also took pride in his new care-taking abilities, which were akin

to her own life credo. In other aspect of separation, namely her inability to exercise complete control over Victor's environment, she seemed to experience a form of an acute sense of guilt about not providing the best possible school for him. Instead of just mentioning it in passing, she defined it as a "first step on a path of compromises" implying that it became related to, if not had caused, subsequent compromises.

Anna described herself exclusively in relational terms during that period of time, in contrast to her self-description at the moment when her son was born, which comprised her professional role and her personal relationships.

(Describe yourself at the period of time when Victor was five-six years of age.) On the one hand, when my husband's brother died and his mother, too, Victor was six. It overshadowed everything to a large extent. I was very constrained. (In what way?) I had to make frequent phone calls, run errands, constantly think about it. I was not able to do what I wanted and when I wanted it. And because I was not able to experience the stream of sincere compassion either, I had that internal struggle all the time. On the other hand, I considered the child to be the most important part of life, for everybody. .... (P. 8)

I felt contempt toward my in-laws because they were so centered on their own sorrow. They felt that the world should do the same revolving around them and their sick son...(P.9)

Anna defined herself not only exclusively in relational terms, but also through a particular aspect of it – her care-giving role in the relationships. She named lack of love as the main reason she could not feel devotion, but merely sense of obligation toward her parents-in-law. One could also venture to say that Anna felt most comfortably in a position of concentrating on the future and progress. She stated she felt resentful because her parents-in-law were so self-centered. Partially, this resentment toward them could be an externalization of her feelings toward herself because of her inability to insist upon doing what she considered to be important - to take care of her son. From the outside, everything looked sensible and respectable – Anna was taking good and appropriate care of her extended family. Even though her life seemed to be in harmony with her life credo, it significantly interfered with her focusing on future. This could possibly bring about anxiety and a need for externalization.

## Adolescent years

(When you think about children's independence, what comes to mind?)  
...When he was about eleven, he suddenly stopped sharing with me the details of his life. With that said, I continued to trust him, and I have this attitude – I do not question him. Now that I think about it, maybe it is not the best thing to do. (P.1)

The most worrisome thing for me was that he stopped talking. I did not know what was going on for him, I thought it was not smart...So many of his friends were coming to me for advice, and Victor didn't. I could've showed him how to talk to the girls. Only once he asked me how to break up in a delicate manner with a girl. ...I guess, he decided that he was independent. Maybe he thought we were going to criticize him, that we would want him to have different friends, different girls. (P.26-27)

When he became thirteen – an interesting thing – I started to trust him absolutely, unlimited they call it. I had this feeling that whatever he was doing, he did it better than I would have done. He knew better, his understanding was deeper. And I could only spoil things...(P.14)

He found new friends, new interest. He discovered Judaism for himself. However, the more interesting the outside world became, the less interesting his school was for him. Then he spent one year in Israel. ...It was very difficult for him – physically and also he was the first one to be admitted in a native-speakers class, leaving the rest of the crowd behind. (How did you tolerate him going there?) It was terrifying for me, but also I was beaming with pride. ...He was the only one chosen from many families that we knew. (P.13)

There are at least three interesting trends in this transition that seem to give important insights into Anna's style of letting go. One is the channel that Victor chose to rebel through, or Anna felt the most worried about. We explored other possible displays of Victor's independence, and Anna stated that in choosing his clothing or after school activities, etc, he had all the autonomy he wanted. It is possible that the only outlet left for him to feel and demonstrate his independence was to stop verbal sharing. This particular avenue had additional meaning for Anna with her attention to the linguistic components of life in general.

Another clue about the internal structure of Anna's relating to the objects is the way she claimed she granted her thirteen-year old son with her "unlimited" trust. With all

her usual attentiveness to details and introspection, she was not able to articulate her grounds for doing it as abruptly as she described. We can only assume that her trust was building over the years; however the swiftness and lack of details on this particular subject may indicate a somewhat counter phobic nature of her trust in him at that period of time.

Also, I want to mention the way Anna conceptualized their first yearlong separation with her son. Even though she described several very real difficulties of this trip, like Victor's frequent physical maladies, or his inability to adjust to different food and its small amount, which often left him hungry; her general attitude toward his trip stayed positive. Similarly to his transition to the elementary school, Anna focused on him progressing and striving in a challenging environment.

(How did the way you were brought up differ from your interactions with Victor?) I was trying to avoid pressure that weighted me down so heavily in my own childhood. I tried not to pressure him... And I did not insist on sport activities for him. He would go once to the swimming pool and get sick... I got scared and gave up. It was my terrible, maybe even essential mistake. Only through sports it becomes possible to forge not only the body shape, but the character itself. Also even though I had never pressured him about his friends or his study, or anything, but deep down in my soul I still wanted him to study this and that or to be friends with such and such... I think he felt it. Because I didn't feel that border when you must push and when you must not, I never pressured. Maybe he would have been an A-student had I pressured him, checked his homework. (P.32)

As with her inability to control Victor's environment, Anna's guilty feelings seems to be an invariable attribute of her reaction on his growing independence. She felt conflicted about not exercising a direct influence on him when he needed. At the same time, she expressed regrets about the possibility that even her desires and hopes might have felt as pressure for Victor, which was against the beliefs she developed as a result of her own individuation in her nuclear family.

#### Late adolescence – early adulthood transition

.... And then it returned – a feeling that I cannot trust his common sense, his talent, and his intelligence to craft his own destiny. (When did it come

back?) When he was in his last years of college. Everything that he was doing he was doing wrong. He gained weight. Terribly. ...All those hormonal processes happened at the same time- weight gain, getting bold, and problem with bodily hair. And instead of working out for six hours in a row, he did God knows what. His study went somewhat downhill, he broke up with some of his friends. ...He started telling us that it was our entire fault – everything that went wrong. ...”I inherited this looks from you. ...You have not taught me to be persistent with sports; you did not give me the confidence...” (What was your opinion on what he said?) There is a lot of truth to it, a lot of truth. (P.15)

Once he told me, “I do not talk about my personal life only because I cannot say anything cheery. And I don’t want to upset you.” When this girl appeared in his life, he told me immediately, I could say, eagerly announced it. (P.26)

Once he told me, “The older I am getting, the more I forced to do what I don’t want to do. So where is the joy of that adult freedom?” (P. 13)

Even though Anna did not state it directly, this is by far a part of her narrative that inflicts the most excruciating pain on her. She kept coming back to this issue of her son’s profound unhappiness about the way he looks, about his inability to attract females, and about his difficulties in finding a motivating professional activity. With her persistent focus on future and progress, one can only speculate what it means for her to bear witness of her son grappling with several major tasks of early adulthood and not succeeding.

(Your life in ten years.) ...For Victor to build his career, and to do what he wants to do as his job, not like a constantly struggling elderly immigrant trying to catch whatever is floating around. (P.21)

Had I brought him up stronger, he could’ve been able to study while working at not that exciting job. But he is not able to organize his time, and to fight off his melancholy when it’s present. ....He is not able to do it. It was a life task for me. My husband cannot do it.... But I can do it; it is so unfair that I was not able to teach that to my son. (P.16)

I have not taught him to find pleasure in any kind of venture. .... My inner approach is that life has to be joyful. (Not from your parents?) No. My parents implanted more of a sense of responsibility. My main idea, I think, in that if you are not able to do what you enjoy, then enjoy what you do. (P.32)

According to her , it took Anna all her life, up until present time, to develop and master this life approach. The irrational nature of her expectations, that somehow it was possible for her to teach her son this approach seems to be connected to one of the leitmotif themes of blaming herself for possibly defective, or not good enough genetic make-up of her son, which was presented as one of the leitmotif's statements. If we were to put together a list of what Anna blames herself for at the present time, it would be almost a verbatim repetition of her son's accusations thrown at her and her husband. I put a quote about her ideal life-model in ten years here because it can serve as an ideal resolution to Victor's concerns about the lack of "adult freedom" in all of his activities. Therefore, she demonstrated a tendency to completely merge her wishes with those of her son. It is somewhat difficult to determine whether Anna started to feel guilty around certain issues when she saw him stalling in some ways, and then through varied mechanisms she provoked those accusations. Another possibility is that his accusations came first and through complete identification with him, she started to feel not just unhappy, but utterly responsible. One can argue for both scenarios, but the main result is a significant lack of boundaries between the mother and son, which seemed to not be present to such extent in the earlier years.

Suddenly in the middle of my beautiful vacation ...in the middle of ocean I caught myself thinking, "Oh my God, I am swimming here while my child in this New York God knows what doing, going on interviews, nobody knows what he is eating. And why is that he is so foolish; I couldn't convince him to go with me. Yes, in my company, which is repugnant in itself (smiling), but better than nothing at all. Or in some interesting group ...I have this acute feelings of shame and pity – why is he not here? As soon as this thought haunted me, I experienced sudden drop of tonus and diminished interest to my surrounding (laughing). (P.10)

I haven't separated (from my son) in a true way. I recognize that it's not possible for an umbilical cord to stay half-cut. But if feels that it is half-cut from my side. I always have tried, and I am trying now to separate him from myself for his sake. (P.24)

In these quotes, Anna described both experientially and on more abstract level her current relationship with her son. The recognition of her inability to experience pleasure if Victor is not around can be a grown-up version of her experiencing first love when he

was born. A feeling of partnership, rather than maternal feeling, may stir up anxiety, which on a conscious level she experienced as a worry that it is not “advantageous” for him to be so attached to her. Unconsciously, this anxiety might have played out in her counter phobic detachment - her sudden trust in him when he was thirteen. However, under the stress of Victor’s failure, different psychological mechanisms seem to prevail which leads to the melting of the boundaries between mother and son.

#### First stage of immigration: decision-making

(When you think about immigration, what comes to mind?) ...New life. No. Not new. Another life. I did not expect that it would be SO difficult, that I would be practically alone in this battle... But it was the idea of another life. It was possible to stay with the feeling of gradual decay and dying nevertheless.... Plenty of people live there and rot, feeling better than we are...but I needed to live another life. (P.35)

I came here to visit my aunt... I worked here as a babysitter. All my relatives here insisted on filling out needed documents. I came home.... And all of a sudden my husband said, “Well, we do need to go. For Victor’s sake.” ...I tried to convey to him both my interest in that move and my doubts about our ability to insure Victor’s future. The kind of future my husband was dreaming of when he (the husband) would be left without my parents’ connections, support...I myself was curious, it was an adventure. Of course, I was afraid, but not too much. (P. 37)

That is going to be a new world, new acquaintances, and new activities. It will be a developing, young world... (P.38)

In her account of her fantasies about immigration and moving forces, Anna tried her best to stay true to her experiences seven-eight years ago even though she acknowledged the prism of the difficult immigration years and relatively recent marital discord.

(Describe yourself at the period of time when decision to immigrate was made.) I was forty-something. I looked amazing. That was the case of a ‘midlife woman’s blossom’. My weight was perfect. I could wear whatever I wanted...I taught a fantastic linguistic class...I worked in publishing; I worked in the Academy of Online Education. I was so eager for all of that after spending twenty years in my Scientific Institute. Men were advancing me on the streets like never before... I felt that I was bringing joy with my presence. (P.41)

Anna's very vivid self-description makes her fantasies at that period of time grounded, so to speak. She felt at the peak of her intellectual and physical abilities, she managed to structure her professional life in Moscow accordingly, and she was positive about her abilities to enjoy whatever was awaiting for her in the new world. She concentrated on the present and the future, as it is evident from the following quote.

(How was the process of leaving for you?) I had to work on myself. I had to keep hope and trust in the future. As opposed to my nearest relatives, I began to study English. I took a very fancy progressive class. I perceived everything from a vantage point of how it can be used in the US. I took recommendation letters from my Academy thinking about finding something similar here. My husband, he was saying his good-byes, that's all he was doing. Victor was socializing. ...I wasn't really severing the connections. My publisher asked me to do some work for him "in my spare from immigration time". ...I had a feeling that the world was permeable and small. (P.44)

This concentration on the future and her actions were signs of an adaptive and defensive nature. To a small extent, Anna is able to acknowledge its defensive nature, but mostly she distinguished herself from her husband accusing him of passivity. Interestingly enough, this quote was the only one remotely mentioning cutting or rather not cutting her ties. Instead, she focused on what she was about to undertake.

#### Subsequent stages of immigration: arrival and adjustment

(Tell me about your first impressions.) All the time, I had a sense that this was temporary. We cannot stay in that smelly, dirty Brooklyn. But while we were there – there was so much to enjoy. We could walk to our relative's place, to shopping, parks, and beaches. All my initial curiosity, all overcoming was grounded in a sense that it was temporary, and then everything was going to be better. In fact, everything became worse. My husband got sick, and it was a never-ending thing. (P.38)

The stages are obvious. First period – about two months – social benefits, English classes, new people, neighborhood, etc. I became involved with and torn apart by the Russian-speaking community. Volunteering, socializing...

Then my husband got sick, and everything fell apart. ...I went to work in a newspaper and in G.I. ...I had to occupy myself, we needed money. It was a long period of time. I was moving somewhere, doing something. The third period in my life is this current job. It differs very vividly compare to everything beforehand. ...We are still poor, but we are not

destitute. I connect with people I enjoy. I am taking different trainings and I understand everything (that is told). All days I spend interacting, reading and writing in English. This life I consider to be dignified, as opposed to the work in a Russian-speaking newspaper. (P.40)

Anna's account of the stages in her immigration path contains much more than just a list of her varied job activities. In the beginning stage, her orientation in a new country was comprised of several different routes: her interaction with her "neighborhood" with its geographical and social component; socializing in a wider community, and 'pre-vocational' activities, which included advancing in her language skills and exploring job possibilities. Her husband's illness inadvertently sped up her adjustment processes, but it also became a great impediment on their way to becoming partners in the immigration process. On her earliest part-time jobs she used her publishing and teaching skills. All of them were mostly oriented on the Russian-speaking community. As evident from the last part of the above quote, Anna was not satisfied with this orientation. Her current job offers more opportunities to experience diverse New York culture. In terms of personal and professional interactions, she mentioned several times her admiration for high competency of her co-workers, and a continued prospect of learning for herself.

#### Varied internal transitions

I left (Russia) as if, let's say I got married and went to Far East (a part of Russia). ...That could happen. ...I did not break the ties. Later I found out they did break. It happened over the years. Some of my friends came to the US to visit; I met with them – especially during first two years. Than it gradually stopped. (P. 45)

Some priorities are changing. People, whom I considered to be my close friends, are no longer that for me. We developed more connections with some of those who used to be my acquaintances. They became more important in my life. (P.49)

Despite my detailed probing, Anna's only expressed feelings of longing centered on her son's early childhood years and babyishness in his appearance and relatedness; and also on her own youthful appearance and vigor in the years prior to immigration. In the rest of her narrative, as in the above quote, Anna used metaphors that restructured potentially longing-provoking experience into a more neutral one. Yes, she did notice

changes in her relationship with people, but if her former friends are "no longer that" for her, then there is no need to experience sadness about their loss.

I started photo albums here. We all have separate albums, but mine is the biggest and the messiest. But there is one album that I made with great meticulousness. It contains pictures of people we lost. My relatives and my husband's relatives, including those whom we already lost here, in New York. .... I want it to exist for later on, for the future. If I don't do it, it is not going to exist. It will be gone.... Maybe someone from those who come after me will take a look at it. At least, from a designer point of view because it is really done nicely. ... .. If there is someone still looking at these pictures, then there is still a tiny link. (P.47)

Besides focusing on future and reframing, from this quote we have a glimpse of another strategy that Anna used to deal with the sense of loss. She acknowledged the fact of losing those people, and the need to remember and to have a symbolic connection to them. Then she played an active role in creating and maintaining this connection. In the process of doing that, she used her artistic capabilities to the full extent, which probably encapsulated some feelings that she had for those people. In this way, even without acknowledging her feelings, it seems that Anna found an adaptive route to work through them.

There are several substantial changes that Anna accentuated herself in her self-description, her sense of self and others, over more or less defined period of time. I just want to list some of the quotes in which Anna describes those changes.

My energy, my strength is gone. I used to have plenty of it (seven years ago). I used to have this hoard of it when I would wake up and soar. Now I am getting out of bed with a screech. Each cell of mine is fatigued. I get tired from riding a subway, I live with a screech. I still do everything, but I managed to keep weightlessness only in my thoughts. In my mind, my character maybe. .... But not in my emotional world. As if something trampled me down. (What did?) I do not see my relatives being happy, I can't make them happy. It's not just trampling, it's killing me. Even more, when my husband or my son pour their depression onto me, it's quite possible that in the morning they don't remember, don't feel it but I do. And I live under this *cover*. ... I used to be able to make their life easier, more joyful, often more thriving. Suddenly, it slipped out of my hands. (P.42)

He (the husband) implied that men have this extraordinary psychic organization when they suffer and sink into that suffering. But I, like a horse, live separately from my depression. ... There is truth to it. Yes, I suffer, I am miserable, but I still go to work and do dishes. That's the jerk I am. They probably wouldn't die if I don't do it. (P. 48)

So he (Anna's husband) went to Moscow to look for some business connections. I am afraid that he is losing all hopes for integration in the US, but also for how long I can be orphaned.... I wasn't expecting to find myself in the company of middle-age lonely women, Russian-speaking immigrants... In this regard, our relationship with my husband has changed substantially. The fact that he left (spending long periods of time in Moscow) and is trying to find something over there, is very undermining for me. (Pp.50-51)

I became mean and cruel. For some reason, nobody notices that. I do not have an opportunity to demonstrate it. But I deeply know, if only once I have this opportunity – I would be mean and cruel. (Irina is laughing). (P.23)

Anna summed up her relationships with the Russian-speaking community as follows:

I am astonished beyond comprehension when I see young people watching Russian TV, which is hideous.... I turn it on once every three months to watch the news. Even the classical cinematography I am not able to watch now. ...I didn't do it to speed up English language acquisition, no. I think the quality of it (TV programs) is nauseating from a professional point of view, I've tried...Same thing was with C.'s book (Russian contemporary radical writer)...(P.52)

I live in ghetto myself. In Brooklyn, I shop in Russian stores. I know the saleswoman, ...I ask her about her son. I wouldn't say that I cut off a Russian part of me.... I did not shake off my love to a certain kind of Russian culture... Recently I've been to P. in a purely American crowd. It consisted, of course, of Japanese, Canadian, etc, Polish woman, Frenchman. I felt utterly comfortable. Yes, there were words that I didn't understand. And I am ready for that to the end of my days. But this is such a familiar chunk of humanity for me – painters, photographers, and writers. ...The quality of this circle has changed compare to the Soviet Union. The one that is here feels closer to me. ...(Pp. 53-54)

We do not see, in Anna's narrative, any indications of accentuating a particular stage of immigration except for the current one. She moved rather fluidly and freely through them. In this journey, she changes her professional role, not radically, but to some degree. She still employs her other professional skills, while at the same time exploring a relatively new area of social services. She is very conscious of deriving a

special pleasure from her current professional role, and from her current professional surrounding.

The level of Anna's involvement in American culture is significant. She made many cultural references throughout the interview. One could assume a somewhat counter phobic nature to it, especially if we take into account her abrasive albeit selective remarks about contemporary Russian culture. However, she did not deny either her connections with Russian-speaking community, or her fondness for a certain part of Russian culture. And once again, the references to Russian heritage were abundant. I would probably employ a notion of rapid acquisition and selectivity in her preferences, rather than counter phobic escape into a newfound culture.

Anna's active approach and focusing on the future is evident in her style of taking on new roles and tasks in the immigration process, allowing her to contain a mix of two countries' embedded meaning. There is a similarity to her approach to the earliest stages of her son's separation when she was able to enjoy his independence and strivings while she continued to have a strong connection with him. Also there was evidence of a change in understanding of self in terms of the complexity of her relational ties and her developing or accentuating certain character features. But because a mother-son relationship is reciprocal and plays into a very loaded for Anna care-giving role, at certain points it differed drastically from her style of letting go her country of origin. Her counter phobic tendencies, projection and externalization were more pronounced. Her fallbacks resulted in emotional states partially resembling a picture of clinical depression. However, Anna continues to be fully involved in the process of finding her own path within two cultures. She also navigates her calling of an incredibly attached "Jewish mother" who is trying to adjust to a new life, where her formerly little boy is exploring the world on his own.

I like myself more these days. And I scorn myself less. Still do. (Smiling)  
But I feel so much more natural. I belong to life so much more. I have to fake less. I am not trying so much to impress others.... I became closer to my own self. (P.54)

## **Gala's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Gala is a 49-year old female from Moscow who immigrated to the US ten years ago with her daughter, her son joined them three months later. Gala is a computer programmer in a very prestigious financial organization. She is currently separated from her second husband. This allowed her to gain legal status in the US. Her son, Gene, is now 24 years old. He works as a car dealer and is not only independent financially, but also helps his mother out with money when needed. Gene married recently and lives separately from Gala. Her daughter, Kate, is currently 17. She lives with her mother and attends one of the most competitive high schools in NYC, where she is, reportedly, a very good student. Kate's physical appearance concerns Gala, because the girl, according to the mother, is significantly overweight.

Even though Gala did not appear to specifically avoid talking about her parental family, any mentioning of her parents, her older sister, or their childhood together, was remarkably absent from her narrative. When asked directly, she related a story about her parents' troubled marriage, in which love and understanding were absent. Gala's mother reportedly decided to stay married out of a fear that she was going to be alone at her deathbed. Gala described her father as aloof and cold, and, sadly, her mother was alone during her last night, because her husband was fast asleep and did not wake up to be with her. Gala reflected on her relationship with her mother as a superficial one, because Gala did not share much information with her growing up, so that the mother knew only formal course of her daughter's actions, but not her internal struggles. At the same time, Gala felt that her mother preferred her to her sister. Gala was the spoiled one; her mother took care of her to the extent that she did not do her own laundry until she married at the age of twenty.

As opposed to every other participant in this study, Gala did not volunteer any information about her school years or their courtship period. Her husband and she decided to wait for a few years to have children, and their first child was born four years into the marriage. Her pregnancy was physically challenging for her. Gala suffered from such a severe case of varicose veins that she received medical advice to abort her pregnancy. Gala mentioned that there was a drastic change in her when her son was born

and she started to nurse him – she felt like a mother for the first time, and everything else moved to the background.

Gala described herself as an incredibly devoted parent during her son's early years, and she described him as a very physically beautiful but difficult to soothe baby and toddler. Gala recalled Gene's early years as very challenging, both in terms of his health issues, as well as his hyperactivity and inability to be soothed or calmed down. She blamed her husband for not taking part in his son's upbringing and not taking any interest in the boy. Gala, on the contrary, felt that Gene was the center of her universe, as all her time was devoted to him and her family. She worked as an engineer at that time but did not take particular pleasure in her work.

Because of her limited childcare options, Gala put Gene in a day care at 18 months. She recalled him suffering from frequent and severe colds in his early pre-school years. Those colds interfered with his night sleep so that the whole family suffered from chronic sleep deprivation. Traditional medical doctors' prognosis was quite poor for him, and she decided to use alternative means for improving Gene's health. Gala enrolled him and herself into a health group that practiced river swimming all year round including diving into ice-cold water. She recalled drastic positive changes in his health, as well as hers, which resulted from winter swimming practices. It also led to some emotional changes in Gene, having a calming effect on him. She experienced incredible energy boost that brought about a heightened sense of well-being and happiness. Gala remembered that out of that ecstatic state of mind her desire to have another child was born. She felt that it would be a shame not to use that excessive energy for creating another life. Her husband was not particularly enthusiastic about that decision but went along with it when she threatened to have a child with someone else.

Another factor that went into Gala's decision to have another baby was Gene's starting school at the time and her feeling that he was going to have a lot of trouble focusing on school work. Therefore, the baby served somewhat as an "excuse" for her to stay home from work and concentrate on Gene's transition to school. Her second pregnancy was physically challenging as well, even though emotionally she was in a much better shape. She knew what to expect, and, according to her, she felt much stronger as a result of year-round river swimming. The baby, Kate, turned out to have an

easy temperament. She took long naps while Gala concentrated on helping Gene with his homework. Gene, as predicted, had a lot of difficulties at school. In Gala's understanding, he was not able to feel successful academically; therefore he tried to gain popularity and recognition among peers by being a class clown. In addition, he had difficulties with sustained attention, reading, and planning. Gala recalled the long hours spent tutoring him, and also taking him to museums, reading to him, etc. She felt that her husband continued to be utterly unhelpful, not recognizing his son's difficulties or resources. Only once did the father take a definite interest in Gene, when he attended a parent-teacher conference, which Gala refused to attend out of apprehension. During this conference, the teacher disciplined Gene's friend for some minor misbehavior. 7-year-old Gene, who was present during the conference, requested that he should be punished together with his friend, too, for the sake of friendship, even though he was not involved in that particular incident. Gala's husband felt immensely proud of his son for such "manly" behavior.

Gala described a very important stage in Gene's development when she enrolled him in an after school activity with a group of older children and a coach. According to Gala, that coach served as a role model for Gene for many years to come. Gene was involved with the activity for about six years, and, she felt, it influenced him a great deal in terms of shaping his character, occupying his time, and building his attention span and concentration. In spite of all these efforts, Gene continued to experience academic difficulties, which Gala thought was due to him, similarly to his father, not being particularly smart or academically inclined. Each year she was not sure whether he was going to be promoted to the next grade.

Gala's daughter continued to be an easy girl, who did not have any troubles at school or at home. Gala managed to be more flexible around childcare, and Kate went to pre-school at age of 3. She was well behaved, healthy, and, when she started school, was a good student. She, too, experienced some initial difficulties with reading, but, with Gala's help, quickly overcame them, and was a strait "A" student in a class for gifted and talented students. Around that time, Gala changed her job from engineering to organizing various exhibitions. She felt more satisfied professionally, as she perceived this job to be much more creative and artistic in its nature.

Even though there was a strong sense of marital discord in Gala's narrative, she never openly stated the reasons or circumstances around her divorce. She mentioned that she visited the US twice. During the first time, in 1990, she went to visit her second cousin in New York with whom she was romantically involved prior to her marriage. She described the visit as confusing because she was used to perceiving herself as a good wife and mother, yet her cousin told her that she looked like a woman that "nobody wanted." Sometime during her first or the second visit to the US, she met and married her second husband, who was twenty years older and very much interested in her. When Gala came back to Moscow with the intention to immigrate with her children, she found out that her husband and father of the children was not willing to give her permission, which was required in order for the children to go with their mother. It took her three years to get his permission. By then, she lost her hopes to immigrate. In addition, both of her parents were seriously ill at the time, and she had to take care of them. Eventually, her ex-husband gave her the necessary document and she went to the US with her daughter, and it was decided that her son would stay with his father for a couple of months in order to finish his school year.

When Gala and Kate arrived to the airport in New York, her second husband informed her that, while waiting for her for those three years, he had met another woman and intended to marry her. He, however, was still willing to help Gala and her family and he allowed them to stay with him. Gala recalled the nine months she stayed in his apartment as the worst time in her life. She had to start searching for jobs right away, and because of her decent English, she was able to find work as a cleaning lady in several places and as a cook in the church. When a few months passed, she went back to Moscow to pick up her son, and, upon their arrival to New York, Gala managed to find computer programmer classes, that she took in addition to her several odd jobs. It was a completely new area for her, and she experienced tremendous difficulties while making a desperate attempt to study late at night.

Gala was aware that at the beginning stage of immigration both of her children were left to their own devices and had to deal with new a language, a new school, and a new peer culture. The situation became especially acute when they moved out of her second ex-husband's apartment and moved to a basement in one of the boroughs. Gala

was at work all day and night, and 7-year old Kate stayed home by herself. Gene, in his turn, had to deal with a harsh school environment where he suddenly became a minority, both racial and cultural, and was reminded about it daily. He was beaten many times, and had difficulties in finding friends. Several times he complained about it to Gala, but she voiced her helplessness to him, and suggested that he get a handle on the situation by himself. After he finished his first school year in the US, he went to visit his father in the FSU, and Gala had no idea whether he was coming back to the US. He did come back but refused to go back to school after one more year. Gala attempted to persuade him. She recalled that period of time as the most conflict time between her and her son. He began to drink extensively; several times he damaged property during violent arguments with her. Eventually he found a job as a car dealer and moved out at the age of 19.

Gala recalled that she had difficulty in admitting and accepting the situation with Kate as problematic mostly because she used to be such an easy girl before immigration. However, after she stayed by herself at home for those long hours when her mother was at work, the girl started to eat excessively, and rapidly gained weight. Gala felt that she lost contact with her at that time, and was too ashamed of the girl's appearance so she ended up spending even less time with her daughter. According to Gala, she was preoccupied with the task of finding a new husband for herself. She also managed to find a job as a computer programmer and become much more secure financially. She described that as a huge jump in terms of socio-economic class, a jump that she had hard time adjusting to at the beginning. She actually was fired from her first job as a computer programmer after only a few days because she perpetually ran to the bathroom to look in the mirror that reflected a well-put together beautiful woman. As soon as she started working full-time, she also started to pay back her monetary debts to her second ex-husband who billed her for all the expenses for the nine months that Gala and her family spent in his apartment. In two years, she was completely debt-free.

She used to visit her parents in Moscow every year, but when they died, she never went back to the FSU because she felt a complete disconnect with her country of origin. The only tie she feels strongly about till these days is Russian language and literature. Even though Gala would like to read more in English, she feels that her language is not

up to the level that would allow her to enjoy the high quality literature she is accustomed to.

In spite of Gala's effort to control Kate's weight by urging her to eat less, Kate kept gaining pounds. The situation took a turn for the better when Gala made a contact with an author of a book on dieting, and he put the girl on a specific nutrition program. Around the same time Kate started to date, and not only Gala was unhappy with her choice in boys, but also the boys kept abandoning her after a short while, and each time Kate was left devastated. One of those incidents ended up in Kate slashing her wrist in a suicidal gesture but Gala did not take it seriously because, according to her, many girls were involved in similar behaviors at that period of time.

Currently, Gala reports having a better relationship with both children. She feels much closer to Kate than before, and several times she described their relationship as very fluid and intimate. The girl apparently shares a lot of her emotional and romantic struggles with her mother. Gala spoke about her daughter as a very good student, a bright and intuitive person, and she contrasted her in that regard to her son. The relationship with her son improved significantly when he moved out, even though they continue to have some mild ups and downs. In particular, he would like her to be harsher with Kate and to follow his advice about disciplining her, which she does not always do. Gala spoke with great fondness about her daughter-in-law, but voiced her concerns about the stability of their relationship. Even though she is trying to be forthcoming with her opinions to a certain extent, the repeated message that she is sending out and receiving from them is that they live their own life and she can not prevent them from doing their own mistakes.

### **Gala's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes** **"I only have perfectly fantastic stories happening to me here"**

#### **Leitmotiv**

(Discussing a decision-making around her second child) It was like a suicide to have a baby back then. We were destitute. (P.16)

They (other students in Gene's high school) beat him up, and he couldn't understand why. He complained about this to me once. I could not help him. I was way too occupied, I lived on edge. I could not even spend my emotional resources on him. I did not have any emotional resources. (P.8)

It was such a crazy contrast, a huge jump between where I really was (at time of searching for her first computer programmer job after doing odd jobs) and where I was trying to be. It was a complete insanity. (P.34)  
(Metaphor about immigration) This person running around a swimming pool in circles; jumping in, jumping out. Swimming using different styles, he is tired to death sometimes, but he is still trying new things. (P.42)

Gala used a metaphor about being on edge extensively throughout her narrative about immigration and about childrearing, and while some of her crises had a very real quality to them, one could not help but wonder about the nature of others. For example, it would come to anyone as a huge shock if a husband that was counted on as the major support source suddenly announced that he, after three years of waiting for his wife to immigrate, found another woman. At the same time there were factors that should not have been underestimated when making a life-altering decision, e.g., a short time span that they knew each other before the marriage or a tenuous commitment of long-distance relationship. There were, probably, other more subtle, cues that Gala chose to ignore and, therefore, had to face an extreme situation of being in a foreign country with two children and no resources. Besides the quality of her perception, there was also a question of handling stressful situations. Gala's first steps in the immigration process were astonishing in their tremendous weight on her shoulders, when she, without any marketable skills, was trying to survive on her own and financially support her two children. It was a remarkable transition from a cleaning lady to a well-paid, highly respected professional job, given that she had almost no experience. However, her straightforward refusal to deal with or to contain her son's pressing issues was nevertheless noteworthy. By not providing support when needed the most, Gala, unfortunately, prepared the ground for even bigger crises in the future with both of her children. It is quite possible that similar tendencies crafted her other crises, or created fertile ground for constantly living on edge.

#### Transition into parenthood

I had never thought about motherhood before... It was my sister who dreamed about being a mother from the age of 10. I was never attracted to that idea. (P.22).

We did not want kids for three years, and then we just decided to have a baby. (He was) long waited for, planned, very much wanted baby. Except that I had physically challenging pregnancy...I couldn't get out of bed, they told me openly that I should not continue with that pregnancy because of the extent of those varicose veins. Nobody really knew what was wrong with me...Maybe because of that he is the way he is. (P.15)

I was one person before Gene's birth; I became another person after he was born. I am the third person here, in the US...Before Gene's birth...well; it's a long story.... I am not sure, maybe some other time. But I can tell you this much, those were three completely different people. (P.24)

From the first two quotes one can assume that the description of the decision-making process was somewhat curtailed because of the completely ordinary, normal, natural quality of this process so that Gala had never had to give it a second thought. However, having the privilege of viewing this in the context of the whole narrative, it becomes apparent that this participant did not want to focus her own or the interviewer's attention on her persona or on her marriage prior to birth of her first child. Instead, she used a means of comparing and contrasting the decision-making process about the first child to the one about her second child as an indirect but useful way of providing us with needed information.

Kate was born after we spent a year doing winter-swimming. ..I did not only get rid of all my neuroses, I felt such richness of life that it would've been criminal to keep it all only for my own use. ...It was a state when you feel that you're full to the limits and you want someone else to be born out to that...They say God's son was born in that way. ...I told my husband that if he didn't want to, I would do it with someone else...I remember the exact moment when I had that feeling that I had to do it then or I was not going to have another chance. (P.15)

Yes, we were destitute, but nothing could have been done about that feeling (of fullness of life). I think that's how you should have children, out of feeling of abundance and not absence or neediness. (P.16)

It seems that Gala worked very hard to understand the roots of Gene's troubles. She partially blames her difficult pregnancy, but from the last quote it becomes apparent that Gala went even further in her search for possible roots. It would not be too far of a stretch to say that Gala, in retrospect, suspected that the thought process behind the conception of her son was that her marriage lacked something essential that she was trying to gain through giving birth to her first child. From Gala's emotional account of

the decision-making about the second child, we can get a glimpse into the intensity, however positive, of her feelings in that moment. There was a strong sense of urge in her description; she “must” had a child, “nothing could have been done about that feeling,” she was “not going to have another chance.” One can only speculate about the origin of this urge, and at this stage of data analysis, it is clear that it was in line with Gala’s way of living on edge, with a constant high level of negative or positive excitement.

### Early childhood transitions

I turned out to be a crazy mom, I cannot even start to describe how attached I was to Gene when he was little. He coughed, I coughed with him. I did not have that level of bonding with Kate when she was little because she did not require the same level of investment, she was much calmer. ..All my youth was invested in him..(When did motherhood start for you?) When he was born...He was so beautiful. I don’t know what that was; I couldn’t get enough of him. It was such an abrupt change. (P.22)

There was a very pronounced sense of strong and positive, but somewhat undifferentiated emotional state of attachment. Gala, in retrospect, was apparently surprised by the force of it, since, as she stated earlier, she did not remember herself longing for motherhood or being prepared for it in any way. There was a change in Gala around that time, a change that she not only had hard time describing but, possibly, understanding as well. Several times during the interview the theme of personality change came up. Gala described her drastic change around the birth of her first child. However, she was never willing or able to actually talk about the nature of that change in any details.

Gene was a very difficult child from the moment he uttered his first word and made his first step. (P.13)

Gene went to a day-care very early, at eighteen months, that’s were he started to get sick...But we didn’t have anyone. My mom was taking care of my grandmother. (P.14)

When Kate was born, she used to take four-hour naps all while I did homework with Gene. ..She was like a present to me. (P14)

I kept her undressed all the time. When I put a shirt on her, it meant it was time for her to take a nap. She went to day-care when she was three, because I started to work only part time and my mother was there to help.

So we managed to keep her till that time. She went to pre-school and she never was sick. ...So much time and attention was devoted to Gene, and she just grew nearby. ..Of course, we also read to her and took her places, but much of the time she was left to her own devices. (P.16)

He had severe colds, frequent nose bleeds. At four or five we started ice-cold water swimming...I devoted so much of my life, my energy to him. He had a temperament that when he would get started on something, it was very hard to keep him contained. ...I could not spend as much time with him as other parents could with their calmer children. We couldn't go visit our friends because he was crawling under the table undoing people's shoelaces. When he stopped getting sick so often, after we started winter swimming, he actually calmed down. It became possible to read books to him. (P.14)

The difference between Gala's description of her son and the one of her daughter is tremendous. We have no reasons to suspect that it was only a difference in her perception of them; on a contrary, Gala was quite convincing in conveying their temperamental differences. Both, the previous experience of her son's frequent colds, as well as her daughter's easier temperament, apparently contributed to Gala's decision-making about starting day-care substantially later for her daughter. That, of course, provided more gradual separation process at a time when the child tends to understand the concept of time better and has more experience with parents leaving and coming back. Also not being a focus of intense, often negative, attention, evidently allowed Kate to engage with adults and withdraw at her own pace, which tends to promote independency. In the last quote, Gala alluded to her hidden avoidance of Gene at the time of his most intense temperamental fits. This tendency to avoid unpleasant contexts becomes more explicit in later stages of her children development.

Him (Gene) and me had that good period of time, we spent lots of time together in the subway to and from our health classes, I read to him... It was interesting that once he told me, "Mr. L (our trainer) is a good person, isn't he?" I said, "Yes, of course, why?" "It would be great if he could only be my daddy." Now, what kind of statement is that?! The daddy was alive and well, and physically present at that time, but he felt that the daddy was absent. ...We never quarreled with my husband, but he never paid attention to his son, ever. (P.21)

Gala's utter inability to talk about her marital dissatisfaction or about her feelings and emotional state was suggestive of significant limitations, possibly defensive in origin, her reflective processes, especially around her own feelings. Her focusing on the

way her husband was not there for his son substituted for necessity to reflect on how he was not there for her. Also, in her narrative the description of events or feelings that led up to a divorce was absent, the divorce happened on a background of Gala's visiting her cousin in New York, meeting another man and marrying him. Apparently, whatever feelings she had about her first husband, and whatever dissatisfactions she experienced in her marriage, became manifest and were acted out in her actions rather than being processed and reflected upon.

#### First child's latency transitions

I had a second child to make it easier, well, not really, but partially...I could not imagine Gene coming to an empty house after school. (P.13)  
The first stage of our closeness ended when we stopped taking that health class together because Kate was born. (P.21)

Gene in the first grade always had shoes on wrong foot; shirt buttoned incorrectly, and always untucked. (Smiling) His hair was always sweaty from running around.... The teacher called for a meeting with the parents one day. Sensing trouble, I refused to go, and delegated my husband for that. (Tells a story in which Gene refused an easy way out in the situation when his friend was about to get punished.) My husband came back from that meeting wide-eyed. He said, "He is growing to be a man," he actually saw his son for the first time. (P.17)

Every single year they wanted to kick Gene out of school because of his behavioral problems. He couldn't sit still... He constantly was managing to create turmoil. He had a nature of a clown and he liked attention....  
There are smart kids out there who cannot realize themselves academically. His dad was just like that - very intelligent but with no aptitude for studying. (P. 21)

Gala seemed to be clear on the stage-related question about Gene's early separations. She defined it, though, through her separation from him rather than his separation from her. Given their extreme closeness during his early years, Gala still had a good sense of his limitations, e.g., his inability to handle lack of structure if unsupervised during after-school hours or his severe difficulties with attention and concentration in a school setting. Nevertheless, in a way, she was done with being inseparable from him because she had another child to care for. In addition, she could have other internal reasons to separate from him at that period of time, but we have no direct account of that from her narrative. Two other trends that emerged during earlier

developmental stage became somewhat more prominent during her son's latency years. First one was a subtle avoidance of difficult situations with regards to her son, and second was to express whatever negativity she had towards her husband through being dissatisfied with him as a father of their child.

I decided that it was time to look for some sport class for him. ...That trainer for orienting made a man out of Gene. Whatever was missing in their relationship with dad, that guy gave him. It was very important; very...It lasted for about six years.... Gene didn't share that much about it, but I could see...The trainer was a real man; it doesn't get any more real than that. (P.18)

Gala struggled to substitute the missing, in her opinion, elements of Gene's upbringing. She, apparently, was very successful in finding and using an alternative type of treatment in strengthening Gene's health. As a positive side-effect, he also received some degree of active and positive fathering. In Gala's later attempt to occupy Gene's after-school hours productively, she managed to not only find an enjoyable activity for her son, but also a role model for him. One can speculate about the indications she saw in her son that called for that intervention on her part; the only account we have from Gala's narrative was that she "decided that it was time," thus confirming a notion of orienting herself using her internal cues about her son's development rather than using him as a direct point of reference.

#### First stage of immigration: decision-making

I used to be a construction engineer, and then I became a manager in a firm that organized exhibitions. We organized exhibitions from scratch. It was the most interesting and creative work ever...It should've been my career, I just did not know it before. I stood behind a drafting board for twelve years. I survived it only because I loved the end product – the draft itself. I had hard time separating from the draft I was so much in love with it... And then I suddenly got into that exhibition firm. The only thing that was difficult to leave was that job. (Pp. 2-3)

When I first came to visit my second cousin here, Kate was two...He told me, "You look like nobody wants you." Now that started me thinking...I was an ideal wife and mother back in Moscow...I was dog tired, but my husband was very happy...It came to him as a compete shock when I told him that I wanted to leave. (At some point you understood that you were unhappy, didn't you?) At some point, when I thought about that my son

had to go to the army and he may not come back, and my husband would not lift his finger to get him out of that, it became my moving force. I don't think that I would have come here, to a completely unknown territory, to just realize myself, no. NO, it was an extreme fear for my child, and also a feeling of drowning. And then the possibility to immigrate came about. (P.44)

Even though Gala had difficulties in reflecting on any changes in her self-concept, one can assume some major change that occurred a few years before the actual immigration took place. Gala seized an opportunity to get a new job, and she began to feel satisfied professionally. Her marriage, apparently, was deteriorating. She needed an external cue, her cousin's opinion, to start thinking critically about her role as a woman in her family. However, it seemed that the period of reflection was curtailed, at least in her narrative. Instead, the results of her critical analysis became reflected in her actions when she took steps toward divorce and relocating to another country. Interestingly enough, when asked about her apparent unhappiness, Gala ventured into talking about her son's unavoidable army draft if she had not immigrated in time. Even though that theme came up in other's participants' narrative as a strong motif for immigration, in Gala's narrative it came up only once as an immediate response to the question about her emotional state, which suggested a defensive nature.

I came here (to the US) to visit, I got married here, and then I went back to pick up my children. I went back with only one thought to get children and to leave. But the situation turn out that way that I had to spend three years in Moscow, because my ex-husband refused to give his permission for the children to leave the country. Besides, my parents were very sick. In the end, I came to terms with the thought that I was going to stay put (in Moscow). (P.1)

My new husband waited for me, called for me for those three years. When my daughter and I got out of the plane, he told me that he found another woman. Because three years was too long of a time (laughing). "Why didn't you tell me earlier, I would've stay put?" He said that he was scared to tell me about it. (P.2)

The pattern of doing and undoing, pertained to Gala's decision-making about immigration. She decided to get married and leave, but when she was stopped on her way, she settled down with the thought that she would stay in Moscow. Ironically, a similar pattern was repeated by her second husband when he "undid" his commitment to her by informing her about his decision when she literally got off the plane. As I

already have mentioned when discussing the leitmotif of Gala's narrative, she frequently find herself in extremely intense situations. At this point of the narrative analysis, it became clearer as to why this participant may miss cues of upcoming troubles at a stage when she could have resolved them more easily. Gala tends to act on her feelings and then reflect on the course of her actions in order to gain understanding of those feelings. This particular strategy is of questionable usefulness when attempting to predict other people's behaviors and it leaves Gala facing the consequences of their actions without any warning.

I had my tickets in my pocket, and I went to a grocery store to get some veggie. Saleswoman yelled at me that she would not allow me to pick good ones from a pile of rotten beets. And I just threw them right into her drunken face. A lady with grad school education threw beets into the saleswoman face in the center of Moscow (laughing), now, that was something different. And I enjoyed myself tremendously! (P.45)

Gala, in this quote, reflected on tendency that was present in a good number of participants, which was a changed perception of the country of origin or themselves in the context of their country of origin around the time their decision to immigrate was finalized. Some of the participants (e.g., Tanya) started to notice negative or unpleasant elements in their reality in the country of origin during this early stage of the letting-go process. Gala, on the contrary, concentrated on the change, in herself, when a sense of having plane tickets in her pocket allowed her to express her feelings more freely.

#### Second stage of immigration: arrival and first steps in the new country

He (her second husband) could not kick us out because we had no place to go.... But, of course, he wished us to get out as soon as possible...If I was able to adjust to that.. a person just doesn't know her capabilities...I would have gone back (to Moscow)but I didn't have a place to stay. (P.2)

I couldn't find any job...I could no longer stay at his place, it was unbearable...I had a feeling that I was capable of everything. I had so many skills I just had to put them at a good use. (P.3)

Gala is the only participant in this study that found herself in a situation of being a single parent solely responsible for her family during the initial period of immigration. An objectively extreme situation challenged Gala's coping strategies, forcing her to use all of the available external and internal resources. She reported on tremendous

flexibility of her self-concept at that moment, which allowed her to adjust to whatever circumstances life presented her with

I worked at two churches as a cook, and in the morning I swept the streets. At my free time, I took that computer class, even though I was hopeless in computers. The owner of that computer school told me not to pay her money because I would not be able to find job anyway; I didn't have a car, or money, or computer for that matter...I had to learn the material by heart because I was able to understand only about fifty percent of it. But I was so desperate. I didn't have a place to study.. so I did it in the basement of our apartment building. (P.5)

Nine months later he told me to get out. He gave me a bill for ten thousand dollars for every day of our stay in his apartment, which I had to start paying at a specific inflexible point of time...I found a basement apartment nearby that I could afford with all my odd jobs. (P. 6)

Even though I do not have any reasons to doubt Gala's credibility, there was almost unreal edge to her story about the first steps in the new country. A feeling of "the worse, the better" does permeate her narrative at that period. It seemed that the situation was so desperate for her that she did not have any choice but to find certain pride and humor in the extreme despair. The motif of overcoming other people's negative expectation of her was sound at that period of time.

#### Second child's latency transitions

Just like with Gene, I helped Kate with her reading, and it was possible and easy to do with her. She went to an accelerated class at school with great results. (P.19)

Before we came to the US, Kate was a child that never caused any problems. Beautiful, nice, talented, well-behaved girl...I got used that she was this way, I took it for granted. Everything started here. (P.23)

When attempting to understand other people and her own internal world, Gala bases her generalizations and assumptions on hers and other's actions. In thinking about her children, Gala tended to use comparison and contrast a lot. At first, she favorably compared Kate to Gene, and found her to be a much easier child in all aspects. Later on, Gala compares Kate's characteristics before and after immigration not with the purpose to get an access to the girl's internal world but to be able to talk about her descriptively.

First year in American school went fine because my second husband spent some time with her, they had good relationship. But then when we moved out, she was completely alone... We had to buy the cheapest food possible, and she bloated on that. When I have noticed that, it was already very difficult to beat that tendency... Even though in our second immigration year I managed to enroll her into a community center where she could exercise. It did not help. She was in a day camp three years in a row where she became huge...It was a nightmare for me. Even though it's a rare state of mind for me but I was completely at loss...I was ashamed to be seen with her. ..I did not want to spend time with her. (P.30)

Throughout her narrative, Gala thought out loud many times about the roots of Kate's difficulties. Similarly to her sudden switch when she spoke about her decision-making on immigration, in this quote she started to talk about Kate's being lonely as the main reason she developed a weight issue but then quickly switched to the quality of food, and then to her attempts to resolve this problem. Understandable anxiety and guilt provoked theme elicited in avoidant response from Gala. At the same time, in retrospect, she was able to acknowledge her physical and emotional avoidance of her daughter during that problematic period of time.

I tried my best not to leave her unsupervised. I paid for an after school program, I sent her to camps.. We went to multiple doctors, nobody could help me.. One idiot doctor told me that the main thing was mutual understanding and closeness... Kate could see she embarrassed me. She told me a couple of times, "You hate me because I am fat." (P.30)  
She did not fit into my success story. ..And I couldn't change her life-style for her. (P. 34)

Gala described well her mode of doing things for her daughter, trying her best to substitute for the periods of her absence by enrolling her into multiple activities, attempting to resolve her problem by shopping for the right specialist. She also was able to fully recognize her own tendency to avoid spending time with her daughter. The only component missing was the one that the doctor alluded to by mentioning closeness and mutual understanding. Gala never attempted to contain Kate's worries and anxieties about relocation and abrupt separation from her father, familiar environment and her mother who worked around the clock. It was the component, that another participant, Inga, paid special attention to, when her son at the same latency stage, immigrated with her. Inga remembered being upset with her fellow immigrant parents for not recognizing the stress immigration imposes on young children. Gala mentioned that the language barrier and the experience of going to an American school was stressful for

Kate, but blamed the lack of time for the lack of help she provided to Kate during that stage.

Advanced stage of immigration

I was walking down Broadway in a new beautiful business outfit, I was looking at my reflections in the windows and I was utterly drunk with myself. Guys were making passes at me and I didn't understand what they were doing. Do you know how I lost my very first computer job? I ran to the bathroom every fifteen minutes to look in the mirror. When they fired me after a week of that, I didn't even get upset because it was a week of getting used to my new self...A cockroach crawled out of my purse during my first job interview. (P.34)

As before, at an earlier immigration stage, Gala supplied vivid examples of how her self-concept has changed a few years into the immigration process. She spoke about the important issue of “getting used to a new self” as a conscious process. It was interesting to notice that, consistently with her general style, she used external visual cues and other people reaction to her to reflect upon and feel her internal changes. Generally speaking, it is a strategy that is usually utilized at the much earlier developmental stages during childhood but apparently Gala employed it throughout her adult development as well.

In two years after starting a full time job I was completely debt free. I felt great that I paid for all inconveniences I caused him (her second husband). (P.6)

It was a period of time when Kate was gaining weight and I was looking for a husband. (P.32)

I thought that I found a job, then I was going to find a husband and everybody would be happy. (Laughing) (P.34)

Once Gala passed beyond the initial drastic contrast of having a cockroach crawling out of her purse while being interviewed for a well-paid, high-level professional position, she wanted to settle down with new standards and new life goals. She was somewhat defiant and sarcastic in her account of paying off the debt to her second husband but took definite pride in the accomplishment. In retrospect, Gala, found her attempt to solve all problems and to settle down at that stage of immigration laughable. It is nevertheless understandable that after quick advance in all aspect of life, Gala craved for some stability and routine.

### Both children' adolescent transitions

I left him with his dad for three months by themselves, and Gene matured very quickly. At the same time, he missed me terribly. He didn't tell me but I felt so. (P.13)

When Gene left with me to New York, he did not want to go. I told him that he might go for a year, and then decide where he wants to stay. So after a year, he went back to Moscow, and I had no idea whether he was coming back to live with me in NY. (P. 12)

It appeared that, even without naming them, Gala talked about two trends in the relationship with her son at that period of time. On a one hand, she needed to separate from Gene in order to create the space for her future personal life and to feel fine leaving him for a while with his father. On the other hand, he, apparently, manifested some extreme form of independent decision-making, which Gala suffered through but also admired.

He got beaten up when he went to high school. ..He told me about it, I said, "I can not help you." I did not have emotional resources to spend on him...It was a turning point for him because he managed to find friends soon after... I did not know that much about him, I was so busy. (P.9) Maybe I should've at least listened to him. (P.28)

Gala, in her own words, captured the essence of the problem she had with Gene as he was going through adolescent turmoil and the immigration transition at the same time. The lack of containment from his mother, and not so much the lack of actual help, undermined his abilities to cope productively with the challenging situation. Even though in retrospect, Gala was able to speak quite insightfully to that matter, at the moment she felt she was not able to provide "real" help therefore she denied him emotional support as well. Just like Gala appears to function best under the extreme pressure, she defensively looked for the same pattern of coping styles in her son. She attributed his success in finding friends to the extreme situation he was in at that time.

We had a situation when he was hospitalized with severe alcohol intoxication once...He flooded an apartment downstairs many times because he would be in a shower drunk...The door to his room was broken, he used to kick that door when he was in a bad mood...I was afraid that he might hit me when I was trying to insist that he went back to school. (P.11)

He left on such terms with me that I thought I would never see him again. There was also that girl who looked like a whore. I did not mind her; I just insisted that she would not get out of his room half naked when 11-year-old Kate was around. (Pp.11-12)

Kate symbolized my impotence, therefore I rejected her. (P.31)

When her periods came, she became even bigger. (P.35)

When we went to shop for her prom dress, it was just horrible...Spanish girls in the neighborhood taught her to cover the head completely with hair gel and to wear skintight pants. I could not bear watching her, I thought, I would go insane. She didn't listen to me at all. (P.35)

Even though Gala described Gene's separation as a much more abrupt, extreme and possibly dangerous in its manifestations, she reacted with more intensity to Kate's separation. It appeared that from the very beginning, Gala internally identified more with her daughter; therefore she experienced her "spoiled looks" as such narcissistic insult. Adolescence was the stage when Gala's avoidant style became even more obvious to her in retrospect, and she blamed her children's problems on it. After a crucial situation or a crucial period of time when she left her children to their own devices, Gala then attempted to heal the relationships, or partially undo the separation, by providing some level of control and expressing her concerns and care.

She fell in love for the first time with a Puerto-Rican kid who dated every girl in her school. And he dumped her...She went nuts. She attempted to cut her wrists or something like that, if I am not mistaken...We had that conversation with Kate and with the school counselor, where we told each other that we hate each other, and we both cried hysterically. It was like a break through. Then she shut down again for some time. (P. 38)

Even though Gala refused to acknowledge that she was affected in any way by her daughter's suicidal gesture, it precipitated the "break through" that occurred in the school counselor's office right after that episode. We can speculate that it provided the necessary extreme pressure under which Gala was able to feel her feelings and express them in a direct and paradoxically productive way. It is possible that Gala's propensity for being on edge was created, not only by her difficulties in reading subtle cues, but also reflecting on her own and other people's feeling until they actualize in behavior. Extreme situations may allow her to be the most alive and to have an immediate access

to her amplified feelings; the access that she is lacking under more mellow circumstances.

Gala's current relationships with her children: early adulthood transition; late adolescent stage

I am not very cautious with money, so this child (Gene) helps me out as needed. (P.7)

I knew that I was risking being told to go screw myself (Laughing), but I still told him about his dress style (which Gala found unacceptable and jeopardizing his appeal to his young wife) and about the fact that he has to help his wife out. ..He told me that he would listen to me as a good son, but it didn't mean that he would do what I told him to....I think that all my attempts to put my two cents in are related to my fear of him losing this girl. (P.26)

At some point I just went to the store and bought good books for him. What really surprised me is how thankful he was for that...I buy them theater tickets and they go. What else can I ask for? (P.27)

From Gala's description of her relationship with her son, we can see a combination of love and care with recognition of his boundaries and the boundaries of his family. Gala perceives her son as an independent, self-sufficient, and dependable person. She still wants to "better" him in some respects; for example, she would like to improve his taste in Russian literature. Her unobtrusive ways of dealing with this issue, as well as his positive response to it, tells us that Gala is able to maintain a necessary distance, and she does not overstep his boundaries in this area. There are, however, other areas where she has more difficulty with not intruding upon her son's personal territory. As Gala mentioned insightfully, she has a fear of Gene not being able to hold on to his wife, and she is worried that his, somewhat unkempt or tasteless dressing style, or his not sharing home chores with the young woman, might impede on their relationship. She described her son, both intellectually and personality wise, as similar to his father. When she decided to divorce her first husband, it, according to her, came as a complete surprise to him. Gala is apparently worried that something analogous might happen to her son, whom she identifies with her ex-husband.

I've never had such a fluid relationship with my son I have with my daughter now. (P.18)

She herself can not bear to look at those pictures from her elementary school prom... She is coming back to that girl she was a long time ago. (P.35)

(After a consultation with a nutritionist) I completely changed our menu. She followed because what else could she do. ..It was the very first time she started to lose weight. I did, too. ..Or maybe it was because she became sexually active so she had motivation...Then the next boy dumped her, and she gained a lot...I am telling her, lets find a boy and then we will dump him just for the sake of having that experience of dumping someone. (P.38)

Gene is accusing me of being too lenient with Kate, that I have to be much stricter, I have to ban alcohol, to ground her forever (after she got drunk and he had to go and fetch her from her friend's house)... It does not work this way with her. (P.39)

Currently, Gala exhibits much more flexibility with her daughter, compared to their relationship before. She is still very concerned with Kate's weight problem, but instead of being hopeless and avoidant, Gala managed to take actions and be consistent in her measures, which brought about positive results. At the same time, she resists Gene's advice to be harsh and punitive with Kate, stating that this approach is lacking the nuances needed to be effective with her. It appears that Gala is very much privy to what is happening to Kate internally. Even though the solution she is offering might be somewhat lumbering, Gala, nevertheless, provides containment and compassion, and is looking for a solution that is acceptable from a teenager's point of view, instead of offering Kate to concentrate on her studies, for example.

#### Current immigration transitions

They make me nauseous (Russia). Much more than before. I can not visit.. Last time I was there at my dad's funeral two years ago...With age and experience I can tell façade from reality. I understand people more. There is lots of sham over there. (P.45)

I am from (named a specific geographical location in Moscow). It is not a cultural point; it is something different...It is a commonality with other people from the same place. (P.46)

I read only in Russian. It is not a matter of principal for me; I just don't have enough English to read books I want to read. And the books I can read, I don't want to read them. (P.47)

Compared to other participants in this study, Gala's account of her relationship with her country of origin was the most devoid of details and nuances. It did not appear to be particularly defensive, but rather was a continuation of her general issue with reflective capacity when there were not that many external cues to orient herself by. Gala had a broad sense of falsity of Russian reality, and she perceived her ability to tell apart false from real as increased over the years of experience. The theme of being able to "see clearer" one or another characteristic of their country of origin was shared by some other participants, and it appear that the increased clarity was determined by the increased distance both physical, as well as emotional, from reality of their old countries. Gala's relationship with her country of origin and her new country, appear to be quite static at the moment. She did not mention any ties with Russia, indicating that they were severed at some point in time, so there was no motivation left for her to visit now that her parents are deceased. Gala seems to be well adjusted professionally in her new country, and culturally she is utilizing parts of Russian culture at a greater rate compared to her access to it back in Russia.

To summarize my general impressions from Gala's style of letting go of her country of origin and her children, it should be noted that her process of letting go involved several major reconstructions of her self-concept. They happened around a few periods of crucial change in the course of her life with intervals of quite static state. For example, her self-concept appeared to be extremely fluid when she became a mother for the first time and when she struggled through her first years of immigrations. This allowed her to incorporate new roles, behaviors and goals into her repertoire. In addition, both events, the birth of the first child and immigration, were apparently related to her internal dissatisfaction with her marriage. Gala was not able to process and reflect upon this dissatisfaction, therefore she had to act on those feelings in order to gain access to them. This particular style can serve as a description of Gala's broad difficulties with her reflective functioning when she had to gain access to her feelings either through analyzing the course of actions or through amplifying her feelings by

getting involved in extreme situations. Generally speaking, Gala was able to let go of her children' dependency on her through a series of steps that involved dropping the ball and separating from her children very abruptly during some crucial stages of their development. At the current stage of their relationships with her, Gala managed to find a more centrist position that allowed for their independency and her care to be expressed at the same time. The trajectory of her letting go of her country of origin was apparently different in terms of its timing, but driven by similar trends in her changing self-concept. She was able to produce and incorporate significant changes during a difficult transitional period and then in her relationships with her former and present country became much less dynamic and Gala settled down in a certain position of preserving some precious for her parts of Russian culture while rejecting her connection to the country as a whole.

## **Uri's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Uri is a forty-four year old male, who emigrated from Ukraine to New York thirteen years ago with his immediate and extended family. Currently he is living with his wife of twenty-one years and their seventeen-year old daughter, who is finishing high school. Their twenty-year old son is currently serving in the Army. Uri works as a hardware design engineer, which was also his occupation in the FSU. Uri rents an apartment in Brooklyn, the same apartment they have lived in since they first came to the US.

Uri did not share much information about his family origin or the events of his childhood. Only when comparing his parenting style to that of his parents, he recalled the somewhat harsh corporal punishments he underwent as a child. He did not express any particular feelings about that, but he noted that he never used any type of physical punishment with his children.

Uri repeatedly described himself as a passive person, led by others. One example of that was his choice of engineering college. He decided to keep his classmate company by choosing the same college. Even though this occupation had always interested Uri to some extent, he, in retrospect, felt that he should have put more thought into his decision. Similarly, following the main trail, he picked his first job placement at a high- tech plant where he met his wife-to-be, Lana. Soon after she became pregnant, and Uri faced a choice of either getting married immediately at her parents' request or breaking up with her. They got married and settled in an apartment with Lana's grandfather. Uri went to work for another company, that was arranged by his mother.

Uri shared his theory about birth order in the family as the main determinant of a child's character. It was a laborious process for Uri to reflect on the details of his son's early childhood. He could do it only in comparison to the same period of his daughter's, Olga, who is four years younger than his son, Stan. Her birth was not only a planned event, but also Uri's initiative, because Lana had difficult first delivery and was not particularly eager to have another child. Uri expressed a lot of tenderness while describing Olga as a little girl. He said that it was much easier for him to be steadily loving towards her than Stan, with whom, he was relatively rigid and harsh.

According to Uri, his mother-in-law ultimately made the decision about emigration in 1990. Her son immigrated a little earlier, and she decided to follow him together with her daughter. Once again, according to Uri, he was put in a situation where he had to choose either to leave his family, or to emigrate with them. The consideration of the harmful ecological situation in their city after the accident at the Chernobyl plant played an important role in the family's decision-making.

He described the preliminary steps of emigration as very quick and hectic. He was aware that he would be separated from his parents and his sister, because they had no intention to emigrate. Uri expressed some feelings of regret about leaving his professional tools and his apartment, which he renovated and perfected himself to suit the needs of his children.

Uri described his first impressions from New York through the prism of feeling all-adrift and being intimidated by that feeling. For the first year and a half, Uri, with his wife and two children, lived in one room of a two-bedroom apartment, which they shared with his parents-in-law. He said that this living arrangement provided him with a sense of material security. For the first several months, Lana was more active in looking for a job, and he took several English and professional classes. His in-law pushed him to become proactive in his job search by juggling him with his wife's babysitting job. After about eight months of being in the country, he found a job in his professional field. He described himself as being so clueless and asking for such a small salary that his employer had to offer more money to him.

Uri's main attitude while going through his first seven to eight years of immigration was to provide a decent living for his family. He used to work overtime a lot and was constantly tired. Uri was employed in the same company for six years, moving from one position to another. When he lost his job for the first time, he felt hard pressed to find another one immediately. He did not volunteer many details of that period of his life. Uri was somewhat concerned with his son's lower-than-expected school performance. Stan did not attend school back in Ukraine. He came to the US at age eight and went to third grade with no preparation or knowledge of English. Apparently, he developed an adverse reaction to school. Uri depicted him as bright, but unmotivated child, who was able to get passing grades with no efforts and never strived for more.

When his son was in high school, Uri expressed his concerns that Stan was not willing to go to college.

Uri's relationships with his extended family in Ukraine were complicated. He attempted to support his parents and his sister financially, but always felt under-appreciated and blamed for not doing enough. His sister and his nephew visited him once in the US. He attempted to show his sister an objective picture of what life was like in New York, but felt that she perceived it as if he was discouraging her from immigration. Uri visited Ukraine once to say good-bye to his parents who were both diagnosed with cancer and died soon after. The visit was emotionally intense for him for the obvious reason of his parents' illness. In addition, according to Uri, when he met his friends, there was mutual misunderstanding about the nature of their curiosity and prejudice concerning life in the US, which accumulated into a general negative climate of his visit.

The main notion of Uri's narrative, to which he kept referring at all moments, was his going through a "mid-life crisis" for the last three to four years. He had difficulty defining it in the experiential terms. His intellectual understanding of mid-life crisis was about expanding his horizons and not devoting his life to one cause regardless of how important it appeared to be in the past. He employed the notion of Eastern philosophy and Buddhism about living the present to its fullest, enjoying every moment. Uri alluded that his mid-life crisis started when he began to question his wife's fidelity and her feelings toward him in general, which happened about four years ago. He felt that his level of marital satisfaction dropped substantially over these years, so that currently he questions the purpose and terms of their marriage. Uri drew a tentative connection between these circumstances and his philosophical search. He also stated that his search changed his life substantially. The change was especially prominent in his attitude toward work and leisure time. He stopped prioritizing providing for his family as the main purpose of his life. He developed various hobbies, but without over concentrating on a particular one. He started to be attentive to sensory aspects of his reality, focusing on immediate experiences.

Uri also stated that his new worldview substantially changed his relationships with his children. He always felt that his daughter was a very independent and mature girl, but his recent philosophical standpoint promoted her independent trends even

further. According to Uri, he allows her to explore the world freely, strongly believing that this is the only way for her to become her own person. He started to encourage his son to develop more initiative in many areas of his life. Uri was not particularly thrilled by his son's decision to go to the military after graduating high school, but decided not to oppose his first decision that he made independently. Internally, he made peace with his son's move after Stan began to take college classes in the army.

Currently Uri describes his relationships with both children as warm and engaged. He talks to his son on the phone frequently. Uri is talkative during these conversations while Stan prefers to listen. He feels proud of Stan's recent decision to go into a particular military subdivision, which promises to be a useful career turn. In terms of his relationship with Olga, Uri is trying to be supportive in all her innovations. He noticed that sometimes she prefers to share more with her mother, but he convinced himself that it is fine, as long as they have a warm and solid relationship. All in all Uri feels somewhat estranged from his family, which is determined by his relationship, or rather lack of, with his wife. He described them as drifting away from each other both physically and emotionally, in spite of his efforts to mend their relationship. He did not express openly, but alluded to his sense of instability and doubt when looking into their future together, especially in light of both children leaving home in the near future.

### **Uri's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes**

**“I am going through a *middle life crisis* now – perceiving things differently, doings different things, trying to find myself ”**

#### **Leitmotiv**

If before my family and my work meant too much for me, I reassess my values now. I am looking at everything from a different perspective. ...At some moment it became clear that regardless of how much money you're making, it still wasn't enough. Therefore more neutral attitude toward life was needed. To live through every moment, doesn't matter what it is – family, work, shopping. (P.1)

I don't want to reach a particular destination but to be on the road – this is great. (P.47)

Uri started his interview with the topic of his middle life crisis and stayed with it intermittently throughout the interview. At the beginning, he mostly defined it in more abstract, distancing terms, as his liberation from being enslaved by an attitude that

work is the most important thing in life. Currently, his main area of interest is to read philosophical literature, including books on psychology and Buddhism. He stated that his pleasure from the simple things in his life, like taking a walk, being involved in sports, and taking trips to some new places, increased substantially over the past few years. Uri also experienced less fatigue from work or being involved in chores around the house because he perceived them, not as a drag, but, as a change in activities, which is a respite by itself. He attempted, in a gentle way, to engage his family into his areas of interest, for example, introducing healthier foods or different schedules, which would include more activities. So far, only his daughter was somewhat receptive in this regard, but mostly “they are still in deep sleep, especially Lana,” which Uri defined as being wrapped up in the all-exhaustive work schedule and passive leisure time.

At the beginning, when he introduced the theory of his current life style, it was difficult to comprehend why he was so involved with his intellectual musing, which definitely exceeded the zeal of a neophyte. Some time into the interview, Uri became comfortable enough to start talking about the driving forces behind the change in his worldview.

A person comes to the middle of his life and understands that he won't ever be rich, won't be loved, and won't be healthy. So what's in stock for him? Something similar happened to me...I came to the conclusion that a person should not dedicate his life to one purpose. (P.13)

I came to the conclusion that I was not loved [by his wife]. So I needed to look for an affair but I was not interested... My friends pushed me into a direction of philosophical search... My inference was that a person should not give himself completely to something, should not be entirely vegetarian for example. (P.14)

If you have this mentality, you won't be bored even in prison. (P.25)  
I am happy with the path I chosen – a path of self-perfection and enlightenment.... A path that helps not to think that you're in pain. You read, you think...(P.46)

Uri spoke about the change in his marital relationship with Lana, which happened about four or five years ago. He described the sexual component of the relationship as rapidly deteriorating ever since and virtually absent now. He suspected infidelity, but never clarified the issue. Uri spoke about this experience not in a narrative form, but rather, uttering couple of sentences here and there, not wanting ,or being able,

to focus his attention on that issue long enough to tell a coherent story. Every time he touched this theme, after a few moments he had to switch the topic to his new worldview, his voice gaining a trans-like quality. Once he used the word “pain” in connection to possible escape from it in his new philosophical path, but he never put the pronouns “I” or “me” anywhere close to an adjective or verb describing feelings states around his situation with his wife. Apparently, Uri’s involvement with philosophical literature at that specific time provided him with a route to occupy and comfort himself, to escape into intellectual pursuit. Interestingly, Uri pointed out how his search triggered his ability to sharpen his senses and his desire to attend to the sensual component of the reality. His capacity to by-pass the feeling while going directly from sensory impressions to thoughts, is striking and lingers on a verge of dissociation. He spoke of being entertained even in prison if one has “this mentality,” which hints on the way he might have perceived the situation. He dedicated a good portion of his life to providing for his family only to discover that the foundation of that family did not exist any more. Understandably, he would be hesitant to devote his life to any single “cause” after such an experience.

## **Transitions**

### Transition into parenthood

We had a prompt wedding because Lana was pregnant. It was not planned; I faced a choice of either marriage or immediate break-up. So I accepted it. (Was it difficult to decide?) I was young, not really. Maybe... With the second one it was more interesting. I kind of became imbued with the first one, so I calculated that in three years [we could conceive] a girl...Lana had difficult first labor so she didn’t want to have another one. Later she forgot, and Olga was born. She was so amusing, so bold for such a long time. [Smiling]. (P.19)

I have this theory that first child is a rupture; you say “good-bye” to you old ways of life. Don’t want to phrase it this way, but whom to blame if not a child. ...With the second one, you are already shattered, so you actually start to enjoy it. (P.19)

When describing himself, Uri, acknowledged several times his earlier passive stand in life and his tendency to be led by others, using as an example the way he

chose his occupation. In his leitmotiv of mid-life crisis, it was the influence of his “sophisticated” friends that pushed him in the direction of particular philosophical literature.

Uri’s ordeal around the first baby is somewhat difficult to define as decision-making, or, at least, as a decision-making concerning the child. From his description, by the virtue of pressure from the relatives, he was pushed to decide whether he wanted to marry Lana and have a baby as the by-product. It is quite possible that, being unable to gather enough initiative to make this leap on his own, Uri unconsciously created a situation in which he had to decide as a response to the external pressures. He was very vocal about his resentment toward his first-born son, which could serve as an example of displacement of his aggressive impulses he experienced as a result of imposed pressure. His obvious fondness for his second child was in striking contrast to the way he experienced his first child. After he was “shattered” by the arrival of his son, he was actually able to feel love for his daughter.

#### Early childhood transitions

I tried to raise Stan differently [compare to the ways Uri himself was raised]. When I put him to sleep, I turned on classical music. Later on the musical center was in his room, he knew some of the tapes by heart. ...My dad visited us and acknowledged with a surprise that I was raising him differently. I was a second-hand smoker as a child. (P.40)

I made this swing set for them, but there was not enough space. So that in order for them to swing, the bathroom door needed to be open, and they swung into the bathroom. [Smiling] (P.19)

It is possible to infer a substantial level of involvement on Uri’s part with his first child, but it takes the form of doing something for the child as an expression of his feelings, rather than expressing feelings themselves. It is somewhat similar to the way another participant, Samuel, conducted the relationship with his son, and even though he was one more step removed, in terms of relating to his child through the third object, like achieving a higher position in the society or arranging for prestigious Jewish camps in order to create a positive influence on his son.

Olga totted everywhere following Stan. She was so funny. [Smiling] It is their picture over there. Such a good child. (P.19)

She was so cunning. She would slip out from her crib and slip in between us in the middle of the night. It was going on for a few years, so that Lana always complained that she didn't sleep for several years. (Did Stan visit you at night when he was little?) No, not really, we probably pushed him away more as a child.... I didn't see a rival in Olga. (P.34)

I didn't have to share anything with her [Olga], I was not jealous of her, that she was getting more of something [than I did]. I just always have loved her evenly. Always. (P.34)

Uri was the most open when describing his feelings for his daughter. He also acknowledged the lack of ambiguity compared to his stance toward Stan, who represented a rival for the supply of love within the family. Uri did not go into the details of his relationship with his wife at that stage, and her differences when relating to her two children. The theme of triangulation and oedipal rivalry seemed to be prominent and not worked through, but rather acted out, on Uri's part by his attempt to expel Stan from the positive emotional grounds of the family.

#### First stages of immigration: decision-making

I did not have a choice concerning emigration. ...When Lana's parents were leaving, she was attached to them and so was her family. I faced a choice of staying by myself or leaving. ...There was no information, well, Lana's classmate [who lived in the US] wrote us letters, but it was like about life on Mars – too distant, too unclear. (P.4)

I was taken away [and brought] here. (P.15)

I thought I would work in my professional field. I was not sure, though. Theoretically, I was prepared to do whatever, but I really was not. It was supposed to turn out somehow by itself, I had no idea how. ...It was weird [to leave] the apartment, not the apartment, the whole world, the house. With all that stuff that I've done myself, like swing set or sport equipment. ...I didn't think about leaving my friends then... I am not particularly dependent on my friends. (Pp.27-28)

The similarity between this period of Uri's life and the stage of decision-making about his first child is strong. Once again, he faced the inevitability of a life-changing decision on someone else's terms, and once again, his choice was displaced

from the actual object of decision-making. In case of immigration, he had to decide not between two countries, but whether to leave his family or to leave his country. With his first child, Uri's resentment was aimed toward Stan. In the immigration, Uri expressed his anxiety about the unknown land of another country, and also his emotional hesitancy in leaving his country of origin. His feelings were centered on inhuman objects, like the apartment that he renovated by himself, or his professional tools.

Back then [right before immigration] I was flown [by others]. I worked. My life led me, I didn't particularly strain. (P. 14)

Uri described himself at that period of time somewhat uni-dimensionally as a passive person who fulfilled his obligations to his family by working hard. He also spoke about friends as a peripheral entity that did not particularly influence his life. He was actually quite surprised by his lack of remorse when his friends emigrated or when he himself left the country. He attempted to intellectualize this trend by saying that he intuitively sensed their future reunions, but then dropped that theme and acknowledged that friends did not mean that much to him at that period in his life.

#### Second stage of immigration: arrival and first steps in the new country

When I arrived, it was a shock. (P.4)

When we just arrived, I had no idea where to go, what to do. ..I even had this ...not fear, but shame that I did not belong. I couldn't even go on subway. Something analogous to shame. (P.5)

When my mother first visited us, we still didn't have insurance back then, I just started to work. She got sick. That feeling of complete panic – what to do, where to go. Thanks God, she felt better. (P.9)

I couldn't get a grip, I was floating. ...They [in-laws] nagged me to look for a job, shaming me with Lana's babysitting job. (P. 5)

We lived with in-laws for the first year and a half. I was against their moving out, because with our living arrangement, I had a sense of financial security. It was more important than all dissensions.

...Psychologically I had one less problem, which was important at the moment. At the beginning it felt as if we were going to go under. (P.31)

For me immigration was just that flight from one place to another, an actual move from one country to another. And then you just have to continue with your life. (P.7)

Uri was torn between his desire to normalize the move and be honest to himself in how he actually felt in the beginning. On an intellectual level, when speculating about it, he acknowledged the fact of immigration but denied the process of it. On one hand, he conceptualizes immigration as “just the flight” itself, and then life continued unchanged. On the other hand, he had enough ego strength to accept his feelings of utter abashment upon arrival and some time afterwards. He felt confused, ashamed of his differences, and scared for his future. In light of his general passivity, it was certainly easier for him to go along with conflicted and familiar living arrangements, rather than venture out and seek independency, especially at the period of primary turmoil of first immigration years. If during first years of parenthood, Uri acted upon his displaced aggression by being excessively rigid with his young son, in case of first months of immigration, his passive aggressive attitude about looking for a job could be a manifestation of his reaction toward forced immigration.

(How did you answer the question “where are you from?”) I always have said that I am Russian. But then I had this sense of discomfort for the first few years. I had that fear when approaching Americans about my accent. (P.26)

It was enormously difficult for Uri to articulate what it meant for him to be defined a “Russian,” as well as why his accent presented such a struggle for him. We can only speculate that at the beginning stages of immigration his inability to go into the details of his self-concept was about self-preservation, similar to another participant’s, Inga, frozen state concerning her relationships with the country of origin. In order to safeguard against over stimulation of first steps, both of them had to minimize the complexity of their worlds. However, her approach led to oversimplification of only one dimension of her life – her relationships to Russia. Uri had a flattened structure in every area of his existence at that period of time.

### Intermediate stage of immigration

I kept myself in those pales – well, how much money was enough? I lost work two times throughout all these years. First time was around that time. (P.3)

I was so dumbfounded [by the loss of work], I thought, “faster, faster!”  
Every lost day felt catastrophic. (P.29)

[We had] some minor troubles. Everything else was just work. We arrived to that apartment, we continued to live here. I am not representative from immigration point of view – I don't think it is possible to climb up with each new job position. There can be *ups and downs, ups and downs*. (P.6)  
It appeared that Uri in retrospect perceived his life during that stage of immigration as a never-ending and somewhat senseless circle of responsibilities and obligations. It is difficult to judge now how close this current account of the situation is to his past reality, because his contemporary philosophical musings are retroactive, as well as proactive in coloring his perceptions.

It is obvious for me that a man has a social circle his wife fetches for him. It is this way for me. I also had this Russian guy from my previous job – we are still friends. ... With regard to language, I started to feel more or less comfortable about two years after arrival. (P.7)

I was with my first job for many years – I moved from one position to another, spending about two years with each... I didn't have to make decisions. There was only one decision – to support my family. (P.15)

In contrast to his own description of his life at that period of time, Uri's self-concept seemed to regain at least some dimensionality compared to the state it was after arrival. He was able to discuss his friends and their common interests, even though he drove on his “ever-present in the past” notion of passivity of his choices. He also described the process of language acquisition, even though he appeared to stop progressing in that regard as soon as he achieved certain level of comfort with his professional language. Also, he presented some level of abstract thinking and conceptualizing in his life position when he describes his approach to work. However, there was a distinct static quality to his description of every area of his life at that period of time, as well as before.

My sense of Russian identity disappeared, not really disappeared, but I stopped to associate myself with Russia after about seven years. Between four and seven...(Can you describe what it was like?) Like I could have a dream about the city, or something like that...I don't remember the feeling of it. (P.26)

I felt between two fires – to take money from my family and send them to my relatives over there. And the feeling was that regardless of how much I sent – it still wasn't enough. ...They were thinking about moving here...I sent them a letter with an honest account about the pragmatics of life here, so they knew where they were going. ...Maybe it was harsh, but I did it. (Pp.9-10)

Uri had significant difficulties depicting his relationship with his country of origin at that period of his life. He had a sense of change that occurred around that time, but was not able to decipher what was behind the general sense of “stopping to associate with Russia.” It is quite possible that his description of an unusual level of tension between his feelings about his immediate family in the US and his relatives left in the FSU was a representation, on a concrete level, of how he felt being between two countries. Incapable of acknowledging or resolving his conflicting feelings on a more symbolic level, Uri effectively utilized resources readily available for him – his intra-family conflict – as a tool to indirectly sort out his feelings about immigration.

#### Visit to the country of origin

In 96 I went to [name of his home city] to say good-bye to my parents, because my father was diagnosed with lung cancer, and my mother already had colon cancer by then. He died a few months later, and a year later my mother died. I did not go to their funerals...yes; it was my only visit there. It was February; all my week there it was five degrees below zero... I went to see my parents. But even then I already knew that my business with that country was finished. It didn't belong to me any more somehow. (P.8)

I met with my former classmates. They asked how much money I was making. I said that I didn't even talk to my mother about this... They asked how much I spend for food. I said, how come they didn't ask how much I spend for my rent because it was more important. So it was different...Also I remember being taken aback by the fact that militia could pull aside a random person, take him somewhere. (Was it different

when you left?) Probably, it was; and then also I became more Americanized somehow. (P.13)

The people were different; we couldn't have a conversation, because everybody had his own truth. (P.9)

Clearly, Uri's visit to FSU was a forced and painful event. And yet again, in his depiction of his visit, Uri was not able to talk about his feelings. Instead, he concentrated on very concrete and vivid physical and emotional sensations and impressions, while, bypassing the account of his feelings, he shifted to intellectual assumptions. It could be one of the reasons he had difficulty at times understanding changes in his perceptions or conceptualization. Because of this mode of presentation, it is considerably difficult to see the process of change in Uri's relationships with both countries. Except for the initial passive-aggressive resentment, his accepting of the new country can be compared to swallowing of an available piece of reality, and evacuating the old reality of his country of origin. Therefore, both processes have an indiscriminative course, and do not allow for sufficient analytic distance.

I should've spent more time with them [the parents]; I should've known that I was not going to see them again. Now I think it was not enough...Now I don't have anyone there, and here I don't have anyone either [his voice gained a trancelike quality]. But then life continues; we come here alone, and we leave this place alone. (P.13)

This fragment had a distinctive dissociative quality. The emotional intensity of Uri's guilt was striking. We can only speculate about whether he perceived his immigration in light of him abandoning his parents, and whether this factor had contributed to this intensity. However, because there was no space for acknowledging or processing this as a feeling rather than a thought, it quickly became unbearably painful, and Uri had to dissociate into a philosophical musing. From the privileged position of witnessing the experience rather than reading a transcript, I could observe the change in facial expression, rhythm of breathing, and tone of voice that resembled an absorbed trancelike state, rather than just an intellectual attempt to avoid the reality by rationalizing about it. This fragment also lent itself for a direct comparison to another participant's, Inga, recall of her experience of going abroad for the first time to visit her terminally ill mother. She allowed herself to feel the incredible pain of the situation. She utilized all available resources to seek support in this process, and still she recalls that period of her life with great pain and effort. At the same time, processing of these feelings created

space for taking in the reality of being away from homeland, and using that distance to form a different perception of her country of origin, and her first Western country as well, thus moving herself along in the immigration process.

### Latency transitions

We rented a country house [in the upstate New York], our children spent their summers there for good ten years...In a way they can call it their homeland. Only [later] we started to travel a little bit. (P.3)

We were supposed to go somewhere, and Stan refused to go. Now I understand that it was normal for Taurus, but then [I didn't]. (What did you do?) I don't remember, I think we either went without him or stayed. I don't think I beat him; either waited or...I don't know. (P.39)

I asked Stan whether he remembered our apartment [in the FSU]...And then I asked if he remembered that yard near the apartment building. He said, "Of course, I grew up there, on the street." It brain-reeled me! I never perceived him as growing-up on the street. But that's how he saw it. (P.19)

From the first two quotes we can assume that there was a process of raising children with all intrinsic to it gradual separations. However, Uri's reflection of it was rather fragmented. Several times he expressed an intense desire to gain more understanding into the roots of his son's current personal outlook and behavior. He had an intuitive awareness that there were some answers to these questions in their past relationship. Yet, even with this intense desire, Uri still experienced tremendous difficulty in seeing the relationship as a process, rather than some fragments of encounters. Therefore, he appeared to be so clueless in the last quote when his son revealed his own perception of "growing up on the street." Difference in parent's and child's perception of the reality is, of course, a common occurrence, but the degree of Uri's surprise and inability to understand where the boy was coming from was telling in terms of how his style of taking in or evacuating reality influenced and undermined his ability to see and understand changes.

I have this feeling toward mine [kids] that you can't jump higher than your own head. Education here doesn't provide [as good of a foundation] as it did over there. But then what am I suppose to do? Teach them in Russian, but we can't in English...So I just washed my hands off that. (P.44)

With Stan it was somewhat screwed up. He was eight when he came here without any schooling, and they got him into the third grade with no language. Since then he has this aversion toward school. He is bright, he has good memory, but he was not doing his homework at all. (P.6)

I was upset with him not doing his homework. I didn't control him, he never asked questions. When I did ask him about his homework, I was getting, "Oh, don't worry about it." Olga asked for help herself, "Come on, I need your help with homework," naturally I helped her. (P.33)

Even though the notion of passivity was very prominent in Uri's narrative in general, it was truer for the relationship with his son than with his daughter. He apparently did not attempt to exercise any control over his son's school experience. One of the reasons could be Stan's lack of initiative in asking for help, as Uri stated. Another reason could be that the father's sense of impotency, "what am I suppose to do" attitude undermined the chances that subtler asking for help could be heard. A different set of rules was applied to the "father-daughter" relationship from the very beginning, which, including other areas, also allowed Olga to ask for help and be heard.

She was about seven. We were in "Toy ? Us" and she was begging for every single item. I said, "O'K, here is your ten dollars and you can buy whatever you want. The child strolled the store for a while and then said, "Everything is so expensive here." Now she always has some money in reserve, the same thing. (P.44)

In this quote Uri attempted to illustrate his daughter's "natural" tendency for thoughtfulness and independence that was evident from her early childhood. A tendency that was "naturally" lacking in his son. Instead, the quote can serve as an illustration to the gradual process of promoting separation-individuation in the child. By allowing Olga to take initiative within certain limits, Uri triggered and trained her desires and abilities to take initiative and follow through with it.

#### First child's adolescent transitions

We would say to Stan, "No way, you're not going to go there." He was stubborn. (P.18)

I gave him ten-dollar allowance point-blank. (P.44)

Uri on his own accord compared his attitude toward Olga who is currently an adolescent and toward Stan at the same age. He found himself to be much harsher and more rigid concerning Stan's attempts to socialize with his peers. Even though Uri

perceived his son as less active in his desire to spend time with friends, the examples he was able to supply were mostly about him and his wife not allowing Stan to do so in his late teenage years. Uri gave an allowance to both children, yet, again exhibited much more flexible attitude concerning the amount he gave to his daughter.

He was about sixteen when he came to me with a complain about the size of his penis. I advised him on some exercises. He said, “Really? Tell me.” [Around the same time] he decided he wanted to be circumcised. ..He insisted, and Lana was not against it...He spent a week in bed, we bought him TV. (P.35)

Three of us - the kids and me - went on vacation. Stan was trying to have a completely separate life...He was about eighteen. Once he got so drunk, he was sick. But I let him go. He started to date; he hinted on some girl that “raped” him. Something like that. I watched him with envy [laughing]...He didn’t really share much... Honesty, I had that fear, because his sexual life was so closed for me, that maybe he was gay. ...Later I figured that it was his Taurus...a person with this sign always makes a slow choice. (P.36)

Uri described an abrupt, almost overnight “letting go” when he jumped from very close supervision to almost no supervision for his son. The milestone of graduating high school and going into the Marines in the near future, as well as the absence of his wife, apparently served as a catalyst for this change. It is worth noting that even though Uri was somewhat interested in what was happening with his son internally, he previously disregarded his son’s internal cues of separating readiness, and oriented himself only by the traditionalistic external signs. A very literal understanding of maturation as sexual maturity only confirmed that trend.

I’ve never seen a rival in Olga. But maybe it was the reason why Stan went to Marines. He never told me the reason. Once he said that I said I was not going to pay for his education..I told him that he had no inclination for going to college anyway, because he didn’t study at school. (P.20)

Lana thinks he decided to go to Marines when he was in the ninth grade. I was very angry, I thought it was a lousy thing to do. At some moment I figured that it was like a job – you trade your time for housing, minimal wage and many benefits. (P.34)

When he was deciding about ... the army, I told him that I was not sure if I was going to continue with this marriage. Maybe that pushed him to make his decision about the army, too... I let it out with him, possibly,

because of that jealousy. To tell him that she was not mine, that she did not belong to me. [To tell him] not to worry, that she loved him more anyway. (P.42)

Once again, similar to latency period, Uri was utterly puzzled by the flow of his son's thoughts. At this point, it resulted in a serious decision. A decision Uri resented heavily at the beginning, but made partial piece with it much later. He agonized over the reasons that went into that decision for Stan. His sense of guilt is overwhelming around this issue. At the same time, it has a somewhat free floating flavor to it because Uri scrutinized his own behavior for possible explanations, but, without any clues of understanding the process of internal change triggered his son's motivations, Uri kept blaming different, almost random, aspects of his own conduct. The last quote was the only instance where he mentioned his internal struggles with his marital relationship and the possible influence it had on his son. However, his hypothesis about the effect of it was unidirectional, not reaching beyond the frame of guilt and initial Oedipal issues that where not worked through earlier.

#### Current relationships with his children

Many participants found it was the easiest to describe their current relationships with their children. Still, Uri's narrative was the most striking in this regard, because his depiction of current stage of his children's lives occupies much more space than his description of all the previous stages, combined. This tendency makes perfect sense in light of his style of taking in/evacuating layers of reality as a whole, thus making it very difficult to concentrate on anything else besides the present events. A similar tendency was pronounced, but not to the same extent, in the narrative of another participant, Lena, who employed compartmentalization as a defense extensively, so she had troubles accessing parts of her experience that where not immediately present.

Stan is too stubborn, especially in public...He is hiding from life... Lately I feel *proud* because he made the decision to take up that [specific military] program. I stressed this to him; I am trying to praise him. Now I nag him to get his driver license... (How does he react?) He gets angry; he is saying it's up to him. Well, up to him, but when I bought him a laptop, he took it. Or a trip last summer. (P.18)

If before he used to perceive me as a demanding daddy, now we are more on a friendship level. When he calls now, it's just that he wants to talk as an equal, but doesn't yet know how to. When I ask something about license, he immediately drifts away. (P.38)

This particular stage of the parent-child relationship during the child's early adulthood years, in Uri's narrative, bore a strong resemblance to the corresponding stage in another participant's, Samuel, narrative. They both described this transition as being a mixed bag of relating on an adult level and occasional slips into relating on a teenager-parent level with pronounced traces of rebellion on their children's part. However, Samuel was able to step back and reflect on his son's tendencies, in a manner that demonstrated understanding of functions of these fluctuations as developmental transitions. Uri merely listed the behaviors, some of which characterized his son as an independent individual, and some – as a person “without initiative, a sleeping one.”

I understand that it is his life, but I feel sorry for him, too. With all that working out, building six-packs. I am saying, “How you are going to impress girls, by pulling up you shirt? I do not work out but still look better than you do. Maybe you don't eat right?” (P.20)

I push him, I drag him. I feel pity for him; I want him to start living, and not to be stuck in the same place. (P.33)

He said he wants to go back to boot camp. First, I couldn't figure out why. And then I got it – it gave him a sense of structure. Now he is on his own, which is much harder for him. (P.37)

Uri spoke about Stan in a manner that conveyed his conflicted feelings concerning his son. According to Uri, Stan feels closer to him than to his mother. Uri reported spending more time with Stan when he comes home, and having lengthy conversations with him over the phone. There was a lot of tenderness and love expressed when discussing his son's current issues. In fact, more intense if compared to his early childhood, which can be a function of his style of relating to reality. At the same time, the theme of rivalry was no less pronounced and powerful, especially around the subject of physicality. Possibly, because Uri painted a picture of his son as a passive person, the rivalry seemed to be stemming from the father's feeding it rather than from Stan himself. Also, Uri's description of his twenty-year old son was very similar to the way he describe himself in his early twenties, that is, lacking initiative, being led by others, not taking independent steps, not thinking his decisions through. . However, Uri didn't reflect on this similarity, possibly lacking the needed distance from the subject to do so. All in all,

through Uri's account, it was possible to observe changes toward more independence in Stan's attitude about conducting his own life. Either Stan's input became too strong to ignore, or the father became more receptive toward his son's rebellious leanings.

About three years ago we gave her [Olga] a credit card, so that she buys whatever she wants. (P.2)

She can go out with her friends or her boyfriend late at night. (P.18)

She reads people very well, like a good psychologist. (P.22)

I strongly believe that she will be fine; she is such an intelligent person. (P.34)

I do not demand anything ... I stopped demanding. She lives next to me, and I am thankful for this. (P.35)

She is trying to figure herself out; to understand what she is about. (P.37)

Out of all the participants' narratives, Uri exhibited the largest difference concerning his stance toward his two children. It was amazing to see such contradictory statements about his son and daughter next to each other. Even though Uri alluded to the difference in their predispositions, he, without systematizing it, described his own behaviors over the years that can be summed up as promoting independence in his daughter, and inhibiting independence of his son. At the present moment, Uri described adolescent Olga as more capable of standing on her own compared to her older brother. The father also exhibited much more acceptance, understanding, and willingness to see things in perspective concerning her.

I would say that some shift did happen [in me]. (P.16)

Maybe I am different now because I started to share, to tell her [Olga] things. ...Also some things have changed within our family, [for example] what we eat. (P.21)

I used to think that it was our misfortune that he is so passive, so without any desires...Only recently I started to understand him as a Taurus, a stubborn and tardy one. (P.37)

Recently...I feel pity towards people. (P.39)

As opposed to rather abstract philosophical musing about the "midlife crisis" of the earliest parts of the interview, later on Uri had provided information pointing to some very concrete changes in his self-concept that have happened over the last several years. He was able to observe changes in the way he perceived others; he also found himself acting differently toward varied circumstances, familiar and new people. He, reportedly, has a sense of himself as a changed person that differs significantly from

his old self. Unfortunately, it is difficult to say whether that change is unique, or he simply did not have recollections of any other similar changes that happened previously because of his way of taking in-evacuating reality as a whole.

### Current stage of immigration

Immigration for me now is a depressing recollection of what had happened some years ago. ...I moved away from it. (P.1)

Something has changed in me...Second time around when I lost my job, I actually enjoyed my time off. (P.3)

Honestly, I don't pay any attention to the language for the last three-five years. I read mostly philosophical literature...Russian; in English - only professional literature. (P.7)

I was lucky and through Lana I got two interesting friends, a writer and a painter.. We visit each other, go out. (P.8)

The community that we have here, in Brooklyn, is the only one that still has at least some nourishment of newspapers, TV, etc [Russian-speaking]. (P.23)

According to Uri, he had only one stage of immigration – the arrival stage when he felt uprooted and lost. As soon as he got out of this stage, everything else was “just life”. In that “life,” he had two distinctively different periods. The first period went under the slogan of supporting his family, and, as a hamster on a wheel, being encircled by his never-ending responsibilities. The second period, or his “midlife crisis,” started from the “realization that he was not loved and was alone” (P.25), which led to a defensive departure into a realm of philosophical literature with an emphasis on gradual withdrawal from old emotional hierarchy of attachments and enjoyment of every moment of life. Among other things, it resulted in his less anxious, less daunting, attitude toward work. Other components of the adjustment to the new country stabilized right after the initial turmoil of relocation. After Uri became relatively comfortable with professional English, he was no longer motivated to make an effort in that regard. His circle of friends was, and is, limited to Russian-speaking people that he was introduced to through his wife’s connections.

(Connections with you country of origin.) My connections – I call sometimes...I froze somehow – I don't know if I should invite them [relatives] over, and if yes, then whom specifically. (P.11)

(So you don't feel any connection to the city whatsoever.) Maybe recently I started to recall either streets, or something else...friends from college. The majority of them are here...I understand that I have to pay a visit to the cemetery [in his city], but I am not ready for this. (P.11)

Out of all ten participants, Uri's understanding of "connections" to his country of origin was the most concrete – literally as phone conversations or maintaining connections through visits to his relatives. He felt undecided about that. After extensive probing, Uri alluded to recently heightened tendency to recall something from his past experience, but it had a rather vague, dream-like quality to it. The only definite feeling he expressed around this topic was his sense of not being ready to visit his country of origin at the present time.

"I am from Russia" doesn't mean for me that I still live over there. It is more like reading a line from a file: from where – from over there. Just like that. (P.26)

In this quote Uri revealed an interesting phenomenon. Even though he solely identified himself with Russian culture and there were almost no traces of taking in anything from a diverse experience available otherwise, his identification with Russia per se had formal character, lacking the depth or ambiguity of feelings. The only other participant with a similar relationship with her country of origin was Tanya. She bypassed letting go or taking in, and created a space for herself, which consisted of a comfortable number of elements of Russian culture so that she did not have to venture out into a larger world, nor she had to venture in her internal world of missing something from her past. Uri's style of evacuating/taking in reality created a similar zone of comfort that, after the initial turmoil of relocation, did not require an effort of changing on his part.

To sum up, there were many similarities between the way Uri conducted himself as a parent and as an immigrant concerning his style of letting go of an object. An artificial distinction of the process and the results can be useful in this case for analytic purposes. In terms of the process, the amount of passivity concerning the decision-making in cases of having his first child and deciding to emigrate was striking. He created a situation with a displaced object choice, in which he had to decide not about the child but whether or not to keep the relationship with his wife-to-be; and not about

emigration per say, but whether or not to continue to be a part of his immediate family. The aggression that accumulated against forced circumstances resulted in a passive-aggressive attitude toward job search at the initial stage of immigration, which once again was a displacement. It was reminiscent of Uri's rigid and harsh stance toward his son, especially in the early childhood, who became a safe object for his aggression.

The only way Uri was able to talk about his son's development was to discuss his sexual maturation on a very concrete level. The same concreteness he exhibited when asked about his connections with his country of origin, which he understood as talking to and, visiting or inviting over, his relatives. The conflict of being between two countries was never acknowledged or reflected upon. Instead, it became symbolically represented as a loyalty conflict between his immediate and extended family. All his attempts to resolve that conflict stayed within this concrete realm of intra-familial hassle.

In general, Uri's main approach toward any kind of difficult issues was to go directly from sensory mode to intellectualization, bypassing the sphere of feelings. In cases when feelings became too strong to ignore, Uri resorted to dissociation thus blocking his access to feelings by a stronger mean. His self-concept had a stable, frozen quality to it. The only evident change in it pertained to its structure that became somewhat flattened during initial stage of immigration. Only his "midlife crisis," which initially developed as a defense, did create some turmoil leading to partial changes in his self-concept over the past few years.

All abovementioned features created a process, in which Uri demonstrated an inability to let go of an object – his country and his son's dependency – therefore, he was not able to create a space that would allow him to take in any part of a new culture or new reality; or to have nurturing relationship with his son and foster Stan's independence at the same time. His relationship with his daughter had a different flavor from the very beginning. It was less conflict-ridden in terms of his displaced aggression as she was a desired and planned child. Oedipal issues were still so prominent in his current relationship with Stan, but were absent with his daughter. Therefore, Uri was able to be more confident in expressing his love and affection, more able to see her as a separate individual, fostering her independence. Because of his style of taking in and evacuating

the reality as a whole, it was still difficult for Uri to see the process of Olga's development, but he was much more successful in this regard. All in all, it can be said that Uri's virtually conflict-free relationship with Olga created a fertile and safe ground for him to accept her on every level of her development. His complete inability to do so with his country of origin and his relative weakness in this regard with his son was understandable in light of his conflicted relationships with these two objects. A very telling quote illustrated his process of evacuation of an old reality and taking in a new one in a frozen form without a process of letting go or attaching, but rather in one gulp.

I do not remember [myself as a Russian]. I am already here; it is a normal life for me. I had the same life in Ukraine. (P.26)

## **Samuel's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Samuel is a fifty-one year old male who emigrated from a large city in Russia six years ago. He came to New York with his wife of twenty-eight years, Anna (one of the participants of this study) and their son Victor, who is currently twenty-one. Samuel is officially unemployed at the present time. He has sporadic jobs as an agent in wholesale, which does not provide him with a stable or substantial income or a sense of satisfaction. Samuel is trying to establish an offshore computer software business in Russia. He hopes that in the future he will expand it with the goal of forming business connections in several countries, including the US. Currently he spends a large part of the year in Russia, coming back to New York every two-three months for several weeks. Samuel alluded to the fact that this work schedule creates tension in his family but did not elaborate on this.

Samuel did not specifically talk about his family origin. The only thing he volunteered was related to the source of his sense of deep mistrust toward the Soviet government. When he was in his early adolescent years, his mother shared a story with him that she felt very proud of. Samuel's father was a local political leader with good career perspectives. Samuel's mother deliberately slowed her husband in his political career and begged him not to take the next high-status job, but to go for a less prestigious placement in one of the Eastern republics to wait out political turmoil of the last years of Stalin's regime. According to her, all political leaders working on his level were imprisoned and killed with no exceptions. This story elicited feeling of anger and mistrust towards the government, from which its own citizens had to hide in order to survive.

As a response to my inquiry, Samuel compared his style of parenting with that of his parents and found similarities in the amount of time his father spent with him, which was very little in his early childhood. He also recalled his mother's constant nagging and lecturing that reminded him of his own style of reacting to unwanted behaviors of his son. Samuel mentioned that his parents and his older brother died before his immigration, but he was clearly not willing to expand upon this theme. Therefore, the only detailed account of his brother's mental illness and suicide, his mother's

immediate death after that tragic event, and his father's last years, were derived from Anna's narrative.

After graduating from college with the degree in math, Samuel attempted to pursue a Doctorate in the same field and was forced to quit at the stage of writing the dissertation, because of his inability to come up with a substantial research or theoretical innovation in that subject area. He expressed his regrets about the time he had lost and his inability to recognize his inadequacy earlier. He switched to another area and graduated with a Doctoral degree in computer programming. Simultaneously, he, through his father-in-law's connections, began working in a research institute in a technologically advanced sphere. Several times during the interview, Samuel mentioned with resentment his father-in-law's authority in different areas.

Samuel did not talk about his family life before his son was born. He referred to him as a "late child" (Victor was born when Samuel was thirty), but he stifled the question about the decision to have children at that particular time. Only from Anna's narrative we know the painful details of their multiple attempts to have children earlier. Even though during the interview Samuel was not exceptionally talkative, he appeared to be genuine and honest. His wish to conceal some of the most intimate and emotionally charging details could be related to his difficulty developing trust in such a short period of time.

Samuel described himself as a dutiful father doing all necessary baby related chores. However, he recalled developing fatherly feelings and a real interest in his son later on, when Victor started to talk. Samuel briefly mentioned Victor's verbal precocious development and his willfulness that were prominent from early on. He also talked about Victor's frequent colds, which kept him from going to a preschool until he was five.

In general, Samuel felt that he was not able to talk eloquently about his son's childhood because he himself was so preoccupied with his work and career. He felt the happiest when he defended his dissertation and advanced to a higher position at his job placement, which allowed him to carry out highly interesting professional tasks. He spent a substantial amount of time describing the nature of his work that pertained to creating software for the most advanced engineering companies in the industry. In

addition, he depicted an exceptionally creative atmosphere and flexible work schedule at his research institute.

Until Victor's early puberty, Samuel frequently went on business trips. It was a gratifying part of work, but it also caused him to miss out on a significant part of his son's childhood. Later on, with the advancement to management, his business trips became less frequent, but he still was very consumed by his professional responsibilities.

Samuel mentioned his active role in enrolling Victor in as many Jewish organizations and camps as possible. He had two purposes in mind: enculturation of his son to the Jewish traditions and creating a possibility for him in the future to visit Israel and, potentially, to stay over there.

On his own initiative, in the interview Samuel, defined the precise moment when he made the decision to emigrate. A three-day coup in 1991, in which communists attempted to take over, and succeeded, in kidnapping and locking up Gorbachev, the official president, demonstrated to Samuel the degree of political and social instability that far exceeded his tolerance and evoked constant worry for his son's future in the country. Even though the political turmoil eased soon after, his desire to emigrate took a chronic form.

Four years prior to their actual immigration, his wife was invited by her relatives to visit New York. Here, she filled out necessary documents for her family to start the immigration process. Until a certain point, they kept it a secret from Samuel's parents-in-law, fearing their reaction. However, when it became necessary to reveal this information, his father-in-law approved their decision to immigrate for the sake of his favorite, according to Samuel, grandson. His wife's six-month trip to the US was the first occasion when Victor was separated from his mother for such a long period of time. Samuel described it as difficult and painful phase for his son and for himself. He identified that period as the beginning of Victor's estrangement from him.

Many of Samuel's details about his mistakes and shortcomings when it come to raising his son were based on subsequent conversations with 17-18-year old Victor, in which the boy blamed his parents for not allowing him to pursue what he wanted as a

young teenager. Samuel recalled several instances of keeping Victor from enrolling into sport activities of his choice. He said that his resolutions were based on his son's alleged poor health. He also partially regretted his decision to send Victor to Israel to study for a year. He was fifteen at that time and that transition did not go smoothly for him. Samuel reported on guilty feelings concerning his inability to recognize Victor's disturbing discomfort while on that trip. Victor himself did not complain at that time about anything. Right after he had come back from Israel, the family immigrated to the US.

In the few years prior to the immigration, Samuel's professional career took a slightly different course. Using new economic possibilities created by perestroika, in addition to his work at the research institute, he started to take part in different businesses that employed his programming, as well as management, skills. His role there was almost, but not quite, leading; and a significant stream of money missed him by an inch. In his last year in Russia, he quit his primary job in order to get governmental permission to immigrate. His farewell with his former co-workers was the most painful part of his relocation experience. His hopes concerning finding a suitable occupation in a new country centered on the possibility of establishing an enterprise similar to the one he had in his last years in Russia. Many times throughout the interview he condemned his expectations as naïve and false.

Samuel's first months in New York were spent attending English classes and exploring different professional possibilities. According to Samuel, he managed to find a job, but, as a result of medical mishandling, he developed an infection. This infection grew into a severe disease that prevented him from employment or engagement in regular activities. His first visits to Russia were triggered by his desperate attempt to find a cure in a familiar environment.

Samuel spent his first few years in the US fighting the disease and trying to find some possibilities for developing his independent business. Gradually, he regained his physical health and decided to join quality assurance computer classes, which he could not do earlier because of his lack of English language. He finished the classes in excellent standing and was asked to teach in the same school. Unfortunately, the school was closed; and his attempts to find a job in the field of quality assurance failed, as

well. He resorted to working in a small wholesale business, using his old connections in Russia. He alluded to feelings of being left behind in his process of social and professional adaptation in a new society, especially in comparison to his wife who managed to acquire not only a new professional field, but also a wide circle of friends.

According to Samuel, the only positive result of him spending more time at home was him getting closer to his son. If before Victor shared more of his personal life with his mother, during immigration years he became more open with Samuel by virtue of their physical proximity. Also Samuel distinguished a relatively recent stage of their relationship when Victor grew to be an equal to him. He developed a new level of trust in his son's actions, and Victor, in turn, lost some of the adolescent tension and rebellion, and instead grew more tolerant and accepting of his parents' opinions and advice. This stage became especially pronounced when Victor graduated from college.

Samuel's frequent visits to Russia resulted in finding new business opportunities, the same opportunities he quit hoping for in the US. In spite of his ability to see vividly the shortcomings of Russian economical and political system, he feels that he is able to accomplish substantially more over there, than in the US, using his personal connections. In general, Samuel mentioned several times his sense of respect toward the US as a country, which he contrasted with his sense of human connection toward his country of origin.

## **Samuel's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes**

### **"I lagged behind and I never managed to catch up"**

#### **Leitmotiv**

When in elementary school we began to learn English, it started well for me; I was doing better than everybody else. Then I got sick... and was out of school for three months. That was it. I substantially lagged behind, and I never managed to catch up. I knew that it was a psychological problem. (P.26)

He [an owner of a firm] offered me a position of co-owner, which I was not eager to take. ...When later on I figured that I could earn a lot, I came back to that topic but he refused me. (P.19)

[When talking about his health issues] I had that feeling that I just couldn't break through. That the specialist existed somewhere close ...I just couldn't find him. I still have this feeling (P. 25)

If only we had not moved, I would've already reached something financially so I [would earn] my son's respect. (P.32)

I have tried to influence him [Victor] with sarcasm. I cannot say that I was successful in it. I should've done it differently. (P.11)

In all these quotes, we see Samuel at different stages of his life, under different circumstances, but describing the same acute sense of “almost, but not quite” getting what he wanted, or actualizing his abilities, or feeling accomplished, or getting financially well-off. At times, he externalized the feelings of disappointment blaming circumstances, and, at times, he felt deeply inadequate himself. Samuel has a strong tendency to define himself through his professional accomplishments; therefore, he may be especially susceptible to feel inadequate and ineffective at the present moment. It is also possible that he retrospectively projected similar feelings onto his past. However, the premise of “almost, but not quite “ theme being not a current state of mind but a life-long leitmotif is supported by the prevalence of this theme in all areas of his life, including his childhood memories, and an abundance of vivid examples provided by him.

### **Transitions**

#### Transition into parenthood

(How did the decision to have children come about?) Well... somehow... (P.5)

(Could you describe yourself when Victor was born?...) Career, graduate school, dissertation. (You mentioned that when you defended, Victor was about four.) Yes, I spent about ten years writing it. [Laughing] I changed fields of work. ...I failed math dissertation. Honestly – didn't have enough guts. I couldn't get it for a long time - the fact that I am, so to speak, too small. I acknowledged it eventually. I found a programming job.... The atmosphere there was creative...We did scientific research. ...This story is important for me. (P. 17)

(When did fatherhood started for you?) Later on. ...I was a meticulous father from the start. I performed all formal responsibilities. But for a long

while I did not have that special feeling. ...Only later when verbal interaction started. ... (Did you experience a substantial change in your life after his birth?) My wife did; I still had my business trips, writing dissertation. (P. 5)

Samuel was surprised by his own reflections on the apparent lack of change in his life when his son was born. However, it is worth noting that my probing around this topic elicited one of the longest and most detailed accounts of his successful and highly interesting professional activities. This could hint to at least two possibilities that lend themselves for further examination. First, it is plausible that in order to cope with strong emotions that were triggered by a birth of a “late child,” Samuel needed a route to escape at first; and then to allow for a gradual adjustment. His elusiveness when asked about the decision to have children may be connected to difficulties in coping with those emotions. Second, it is also possible that Samuel needed a confirmation of his ability to bear the growing responsibilities that came with fatherhood as if his ability to be an adequate head of the household and a supplier was questioned. A feasible way to get this confirmation was through his deep immersion into professional activities.

#### Preschool-early school years

(You prefer to be a father of what age kid?) Either about eight or an adult. At eight you have a rational person, but he still is very young [smiling]. (P.16)

He went to a nursery right before school [at five]. Recently he recalled it as the happiest period of his life. Before he went there, I remember him peeking through a nursery fence so envious of those kids in there... He had frequent colds, that's why. (Whose decision it was [for him to stay home]?) A joint one, including my wife's father. .... He never babysat anyone, but he ordered everybody around. We all love to do it. ...So we kept Victor at home a lot, denying him many activities. (Pp.3-4)

Did I mention that he always had fought for his independence? From birth on. ...By crying, later on by insisting on something. He has always had it in his personality. ...For example, in the nursery he licked icicles even though he was told not to. Of course, he got sick afterwards. [Laughing] It was an expression of that...(Pp.10-11)

A couple of interesting trends are observable in these quotes. Samuel's persistent mentioning of a sensible, rational, verbal side of his relationship with his son could be an indication of increased level of comfort in handling Victor as soon as the boy left a more

primal, preverbal stage of development. Verbalism could be helpful in creating a distance that felt necessary for Samuel. Also, an intense, but seemingly quiet resentment his father-in-law's authority in the family created a contrasting background to his son's "fight for independence." He discussed, with admiration, the boy's attempts to establish space for his opinions and decisions. The persistent bitterness of his remarks about his father-in-law might be a reflection of Samuel's inability to sustain a position of a leader in the family because of the older man's authoritative position.

A while ago you asked me what was the most important when Victor was born. Dissertation, new job position. I judged myself through his eyes.... Once, when he was little, on a walk we saw a Secretary of defense with his car escort... He asked me whether I had a personal car, a personal driver. The subtext was about what he was going to inherit. This is of course, the most important. What we leave after we're gone. My friend wants to leave his business to his daughter. (P.32)

This quote provides a plausible explanation about a surge of professional activity that Samuel had experienced when Victor was born. This tendency bore a superficial similarity to Anna's splash of creativity right after the birth of her child, which she explained as "being in love for the first time." In Samuel's case, his strong professional striving served as proof of his capability and potency as a father and a provider. It also provided a material, measurable, equivalent of love he experienced towards his son.

#### First stage of immigration: decision-making

In contrast to many other decisions, I can tell you the exact place and time when I made a decision to emigrate. The morning of August 19, 1991. When I saw tanks on Red Square [Moscow]. ... It was scary to look in the future. My first thought was about the child. That I did not want him to spend his life behind an iron curtain. I even had a thought, but didn't have guts to execute it – to give an interview to BBC. Even if I went to jail, it would be easier for my family to emigrate... The democratic opposition was so inept and helpless; you could've got them with bare hands. Everything could happen at any moment. ... When Victor discussed moving to Israel [five years later], I was like "What are you talking about? There is war over there. In the US – Marine Unit Six and Seven will always be at your defense regardless of where you are. (Pp.6-7)

He [the father-in-law] understood that it was for the sake of his favorite grandson. Nevertheless, I am not sure if he considered it to be the right

decision. For example, his son stayed and prospered. ...He wasn't sure where there were more prospects...Historical connections... (P.8)

I had that vague idea about a need to emigrate. I did not do that much in that regard except sending the child to Jewish camps. ...Then my wife brought that news about the US. It was still up the air, only later it became more real with papers, and I resigned from my institute. (P.20)

The theme of Samuel's being in quiet opposition to the Soviet system, seeking a new system, and being deeply shaken by the instability of that new system, is beyond the scope of this paper. It should be said however that his involvement with Russia's politics seemed to recede after the decision to emigrate had been formed, or rather after his hopes and trust in the new government were depleted. On a contrary, he started to learn thoroughly, with a degree of idealization, about American politics and economics. The theme of thinking, but not acting, was expressed again in his acknowledgement of dangers of passivity during the coup, but not acting on his ideas.

We can trace the path of forming more general, abstract decision to emigrate, and then realization of it on a more concrete level. Even though Samuel named himself as the initiator of the move, the actual lack of initiative is striking. Going with the flow had its pluses in terms of not confronting the environment, thus avoiding facing his own limitations. His father-in-law, because of the ambivalent nature of their relationship, became a convenient object for externalizing and negating Samuel's fears and doubts about emigration.

Even if my wife denies it now, we both decided [prior to immigration] that we were going to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of the child. It was even spoken aloud. And it was unconditional for me. (P.19)

The issue of sacrifice, in an interesting way, echoes the heightening work involvement at the time of Victor's birth. A need to have a concrete structure for expressing love and care, and a need to distance himself from his own feelings creates a schema, in which all efforts are put into developing an external object, a career for example, that will do well to the actual object of love, a child. In order to avoid ambiguous feelings about immigration, Samuel used two strategies – he created a high goal of saving his child, and he projected his doubts about the move onto his father-in-law.

### Early adolescent years

There was a moment when my wife went to the US for half of a year. I was left with Victor. That's when I started all the Jewish camps...My friend motivated me, who decided to immigrate to Israel...I started to look for Jewish school for Victor. (Was it a turning point for you in terms of Jewish culture and religion or was it only in reference to Victor?) Only for him. (P.6)

Once again Samuel found a third object that was supposed to influence from the outside on the immigration process and on Victor himself. Samuel organized his son's involvement into Jewish culture thus postponing his own direct involvement and interaction with Victor around those issues.

It was easy for me to be left with him, but it was difficult to stay. ..I could cook and everything, but psychologically it was difficult. Victor suffered emotionally from his mom's absence.... a lot of crying. Victor and I didn't see each other a lot. I was calling him from work... His academics dropped, I didn't have time to check his homework... He withdrew from me. Probably I did not pay enough attention to him, psychologically. (P.9)

He wanted to do karate. I got a negative advice on that because of his myopia, so I forbade it. ...He came back to that theme a couple of times in a harsh manner. (P. 9)

He did not share with me; he shared more with my wife. (P.10)

He was not consistent in his studies. I tried to influence him with jokes, with sarcasm...He felt offended...I was not successful. I should've just sit down and do something together with him. I would have to have a lot of time to do that. (P.11)

My wife didn't want him to be involved with humanities. I argued that if he was more interested in humanities, it's better to actualize this than to insist upon something else. ...It was more of an abstract musing... I took him to my workplace, showed him our huge computers. No, not because of that he became interested in PC, it was just a common trend back then. (P.12)

From a standpoint of this research, there is a combination of two notions in the above quotes: getting more involved with his son and his son getting emotionally withdrawn from Samuel. Samuel was not wordy in expressing his feelings about it, but by the sheer number of times he mentioned his son's withdrawal, we can safely guess the painfulness of this topic for him. He openly expressed remorse about the way he

handled situations with Victor at that period, but his remorse had a flavor of passivity and hopelessness in his conviction that nothing could be done differently. So in a way it could be said that, when Samuel felt possibly more ready to experience and express love and attachment to his son in a direct way, the opportunity slipped away. A slightly different, but not mutually exclusive, version could be that Samuel allowed the distance between himself and his son to get smaller only when Victor grew out of the stage of primary, raw dependency that elicited anxiety in his father.

### Second stage of immigration: leaving-arrival

(How did you say your good-byes?) I was not in my right mind. It was a tradition in my research unit to spend holidays together. ... They prepared such a farewell for me, wrote poems. I was totally lost; everything was through a murky glass....I made a speech about my motherland, which is represented by people, and not by a city or place for me. (What was important to take with you?) Everything that could create a sentiment of having roots for Victor. (P.28)

In a way, Samuel was forced to face the pain of leaving directly. He was not working at that moment, nor was he preoccupied with anything in particular, therefore he was left without a transitional space or a transitional object to focus on. He managed to dissociate or, at least, to describe a certain level of dissociation, acknowledging while demonstrating, an inability to bear the pain of an acute uprooting process.

However, I had my illusions. It was perestroika already, I had my business.... It was such euphoria. ...So I developed an experience in creating such a business. At the time of our immigration, I was already familiar with offshore programming; I had people who could turn the Earth around. I thought as soon as I come to America....But then in order to receive a project, you have to get to a high level of connections. I still have them in Russia. Why I decided that I would be able to do it here – I have no idea... Nothing came out of that; it was more than naïve to hope something would. (Pp.20-21)

(An internal feeling of power?) Yes, you defined it very precisely. I felt that way [right before immigration]. ... Also I developed health problems.... Right when I found my first job [in the US]. Of course, they hired someone else the next day. (P.21)

I was bumping against various walls...I couldn't find any significant connection; and I realized it too late. Maybe someone younger could do it. (P.23)

As with two dissertation attempts, he complained about biting more than he could chew and the being late in the realization of his personal limitations. However, it is understandable in light of the immigration process, in which he felt a need to conquer an ambiguous and uncontrollable future by projecting his sense of self-assurance and power into the future. It became an obstacle because his sense of self-worth seemed to not be internalized enough and, therefore, excessively dependent on constant flow of external confirmations, which were absent for a while after Samuel arrived to the US.

Everybody's inclination here is to give advice and to withhold information. It is obnoxious. ...I hate it. ...Many of them feel that if they came here earlier, they are smarter and older. They say, you should do this and that. (P.29)

I stayed at home more. (P.10)

(When did you visit Russia for the first time?) Six months after the arrival. I felt so sick. ...I was totally at the end of the rope [because of health issues]. I didn't know specific physicians [in Russia], but at least I knew best places. (P.25)

Even though it is hard to deny a tendency, in immigrants, to be infantilized and, in turn, to infantilize the newcomers, Samuel expressed an unusually strong and articulate feelings about it. It is quite possible that his already significant sense of inadequacy was further aggravated by this situation, so that he reacted in an exaggerated way. Of course, on such a background, his physical sickness became even more of a misfortune, significantly undermining his ability to withstand difficulties of an early immigration period.

### Late adolescent years

He is the only child; he was very homegrown those days. Now I consider that [at fifteen, sending Victor for a year to a boarding school abroad] to be a huge mistake. It had been incredibly difficult for him and he had not shared it with us. ..I didn't sense it. His e-mails were cheerful.... I've learned about his hard time directly from him only after we moved to the US. (What was the most difficult part?) Loneliness; that he was alone. (P.2)

We needed Victor to sign some papers for all of us to immigrate to the US. He said, "What are you talking about? No, only Israel." ...We had a difficult discussion. He was almost hysterical, "I already planned out the rest of my life. After school, I am going to the army." (P.3)

In these two quotes, Samuel seemed to be both surprised and guilt ridden. Even though he repeatedly and proudly acknowledged Victor's strong will and his strivings for independence, Samuel still sounded extensively amazed and amused that Victor made some future plans without consulting him. In theory, Samuel perceived his son as a separate human being for a long time, but was astonished by the fact that he actually had to take into account Victor's plans; and that his son could have a pronounced negative reaction to something that Samuel considered being beneficial.

(What was happening in your life when Victor was fifteen-sixteen?) I quit my research institute, because of immigration. I worked in two different companies, which was giving me satisfaction. (In what way?) In terms of people, friends, money. In all ways [smiling]. (P.5)

He started sharing with me more than with Anna only here. I stayed at home more, he talked to me more. Just physical proximity. (P.10)

Within a two-year period Samuel's sense of self changed dramatically from feeling strong and empowered to "staying at home" and feeling weak, both physically and emotionally. At the beginning of this time period, he reported on "sending" his son to the boarding school, which presumed very little initiative or input from his son. Apparently, Samuel made, and exercised, a resolute decision that had an important impact on Victor's life. The feedback was lacking or, possibly, Samuel did not allow the space for feedback or more subtle clues.

(What comes to mind when you think about child independence, growing up?) Actually two very different things. ...In some way, they are the opposites. Right after coming to the US, we had that period of child independency. He was 15-17. Now he is 22 and he is growing up and moving out of his child independency. From negation and depreciation of everything, especially what comes from parents, their opinions. ...He was constantly irritated by us. (P.1)

He reminded us that we denied him his childhood because of all his stupid colds. And I respect him for actually breaking the cycle – he built up his physical health and stopped having colds. It started at the boarding school and then continued here. In spite of us, he stopped being weak. ... He had pneumonia in boarding school– he probably went to another extreme – completely stopped paying attention to all his colds. (P.4)  
I realized with his help how little attention I paid to him [when he was growing up]. Only here he told me about boarding school, about his colds, about all the limits we imposed on him when he was little. (P.4)

Even when he was accusing me of all this, he was not sarcastic. He did it in a more [compared to me] merciful way. (P.12)

Speaking about growing up, I was impressed by the way he had chosen his college. We couldn't help him at all. On his own, he gathered all the information, he considered it carefully...His going to college changed a lot of things. We all missed each other. ...His roughness subsided. (P.14)

In order to understand the change in Samuel's perception of Victor, we need to keep in mind what was happening to Samuel at that period of time. He was unemployed and sick, stayed home while his wife made a living and was actively involved in the adjustment process. It would not be such a stretch to say that he felt disempowered and vulnerable. To an extent, he was able to acknowledge his state when thinking about his reasons to visit Russia for the first time after immigration. In terms of his relationship with Victor, I would take the liberty of taking his words about "physical proximity" and transforming them into the metaphor of emotional proximity. The father and son became closer because Samuel at that time lacked the capacity to create a transitional object through which to relate to his son, therefore he had to do it directly without a protective shield. The directness, the nakedness of their contact created a possibility for Victor to share, to complain, and to be heard. This prevented them from drifting apart. Instead it created a fertile ground for moving their relationship on a new level.

#### Next stage of immigration: a few years in the US

I figured out that quality assurance in a way was similar to what I did in my research institute, even though in the last years I mostly managed and guided the process. So I took classes ... I was told that I was among the few who succeeded on their own in that class. The majority just bought the certificate. ...The lady who taught that class – she tried to arrange a vacancy for me, but couldn't do it. ... (Pp.23-24)

A guy I knew offered me to organize a supply of some particular merchandize...It didn't take that much time, but didn't provide me with good money either. So I've tried to extend it a little; I went [to Russia] to do this...I had to do something. (P.24)

Even though at that period of time, Samuel seemed to show a steady flow of efforts. They appeared to be not particularly productive, at least not from his perspective. He was not getting to where he wanted to go, which is similar to his "not

quite” tendency. Several times during the interview Samuel emphasized the importance of people and of feeling of connectedness to them in his life. But in a new country a relative lack of human support brought that tendency to a new level. Instead of almost succeeding, his experience became closer to stumping at one place in terms of factual accomplishments. As with anybody, this could not leave his emotional sphere unaffected, even more so because his sense of mastery seemed to be solely depended on the external factors.

I was used to an elite circle of people. I couldn't say that there were less of them in here, but I encountered people that were unlike those [in Russia]. ...The themes of conversations...Maybe it is hard to tell, but I am not an outgoing person [Irina laughs]...(P.27)

An inability to find a suitable circle of people to socialize with was a frequent sentiment among all the participants. The most recurrent thought was to blame this on different mentalities and low cultural level of the new country. In spite of Samuel's tendency to externalize many of his shortcomings, he actually searched his internal space to justify his difficulties in finding a fitting group.

[Answering a question about his sense of national belonging] I would say I am from [city], from Russia. Even though there is this sense...in one of my visits, I was alone on the street, I didn't have any money or IDs on me and I saw militia. Totally subconsciously I got frightened. Even though I knew that place well...(P.29)

Samuel reported frequent, probably the most frequent among the participants, visits to Russia. According to him, those visits have both refueling and business purposes. However, from the above quote we can infer the growing distance between Samuel and his country of origin, which forced him to assess differently the safety issues in his native city so that he noticed his changed reaction to a familiar situation.

About double citizenship, it's not what it seems. When I am in the US, the US doesn't acknowledge that I am a citizen of Russia. The same is true for Russia. So that above-mentioned Marine Units won't come to my rescue. [Smiling] (P.30)

This was a striking statement, which, on one hand, contains a piece of knowledge readily available for everybody interested. On the other hand, Samuel took this information and transformed it into a navigating principle, where he resided literally between the two counties and was not protected by either of them. There is one more

thing worth noting is Samuel's moving from idealized perception of America at the stage of decision-making to a more complex and nuanced picture of the country.

(What was your reaction on September 11 events?) First reaction that it was surreal... It was a huge shock for my sense of trust in the world – for myself and for my son. We used to have this sense of safety in the Soviets, like in childhood. In spite of everything, there was that sense of dependability. ...So what happened on September 11 was a shock. (P.31)

Samuel's perception of the 9/11th tragedy bore significant resemblance to his perception of the coup in Russia in 1991, which he named as a turning point for his decision to emigrate. His sense of trust in the new political system, his hopes for the future, and his sense of safety were shaken. His capacity to experience a similar reaction on 9/11th signified the development of a notable level of attachment to the new country.

#### Current stage: young adulthood transition

[Victor shared with Samuel traumatic feedback that he received about his body from one of his female friends. Samuel made an off-color joke about it.] He started to giggle. It is really out of my character to joke like this. But somehow I thought of it at the right moment. It was very important for me...we were alone late at night, and he decided to share that kind of thing for the first time. ... But as soon as I switched gears to saying that it was a question of what was fashionable, and that it changes.... Now that didn't really work for him. (P.15)

(What about after college?) He became an adult. We became more friends than anything. We reached a different level of relationship. I began to take him seriously, and he was able to feel it. (Do you have any concerns for him now, at this stage?) I am not sure. Maybe lack of girls. There was one girl and she disappeared. ...He is an adult, so it brings him purely physical suffering besides everything else. (P.14)

Samuel demonstrated a fine balance of stability and change in his current relationship with Victor. He noticed a transformation of his perception of Victor, of the level of trust and enjoyment that he derived from his son. Naturally, the process became reciprocal fairly soon. However, Samuel acknowledged that at times it was still laborious for him to keep interaction on that level, and he slipped into his usual model of reacting. He lectured and it was not well received by Victor. Samuel also expressed

genuine concerns for his son. Unlike others participants who even at this stage of the game felt utterly responsible for their grown-up children' difficulties, Samuel felt for his son but placed those difficulties where they belonged – on his son's territory.

(How does Victor's independent job search influence him?) It gives him a lot. He himself is a fine fellow, and it gives him a lot of advantage.... But the fact that I don't have an OPPORTUNITY to help him [is disheartening] ...Maybe I wouldn't even have to use it, but it's bad that I don't have it, don't have the necessary connections. (P.33)

I feel confident in him. I always had. Somehow I am sure that everything is going to be fine with him. I see him this way. The only thing I thought it was going to be sooner. (P.27)

Once again, there is a balance of trust and confidence and concern that Samuel felt for Victor. He conceptualized Victor as an equal in many regards and as a capable individual. He also expressed genuine care and love, without overstepping his boundaries. He regretted his inability to provide help, but even that he voiced in a way that let us know about his understanding of difference between his needs and those of his son.

#### Current stage of immigration

Up till now – what do I have? Some kind of off the books stuff. It led me back to that offshore programming... During one of my visits to Russia I talked to a friend of mine who was looking for a person to create a computer support team for his new company. I told him that he had that person on the front seat of his car – me. (Pp.21-22)

(So you made a decision to conduct business in Russia.) In general, yes...I can live on that...I still consider myself capable of something, just not here. (P.27)

Professional actualization continued to be the major theme, along the lines of which Samuel checked his success in the adjustment process. His efforts to find a professional niche eventually paid off; and the situation of being on long and frequent business trips was familiar for him from his earlier professional experience. It is quite possible that it also provided him with a comfortable distance from his family and marital life in particular. Except for an occasional covert theme of jealousy concerning his wife's richer involvement with their son early on and her adjustment success in the US,

Samuel hardly mentioned his life partner. Even though we do not have enough information to drive conclusions out of it, in that omission one can see an avoidance of dwelling on his positive and negative feelings and thoughts about her. Being away for months can serve, quite conveniently, the same purpose.

Compared to many others, I am indifferent [concerning Russian politics]. I watch a lot of movies in English. Each and every one of them is like a detective novel for me. [Laughing] They all interest me to a degree. Also financial terms. There was a period of time when I've tried to play at the stock market. (P.32)

(Are you planning to live here?) Yea...I respect and appreciate this country, but it's not mine. I do not respect that country [Russian] but it's mine. (P.24)

These two quotes richly illustrated a trend that Samuel noted about himself, namely his lack of attachment to the city or place, and his strong attachment to people. He seemed to be exploring every realm of American culture when in a broad sense could be of interest to him. Earlier, he reported feelings of estrangement from the nuts and bolts of Russian reality in spite of his frequent visits there. One very important component that he felt, was still missing for him in the US was developing new professional and personal contacts. That appeared to be the major obstacle for him to accept or to feel accepted by the new country.

To summarize what was noted earlier, I want to underline several patterns that were pronounced in Samuel's journey of navigating both parenthood and immigration. From the very beginning, the most striking theme of Samuel's negotiating parenthood was his tendency to relate to his son through another object, which I called "transitional" or "the third party." Its function was to transmit Samuel's feelings and his influence to his son, at the same time allowing him to avoid direct, primal, emotional relatedness to Victor. A little later, from Victor's latency on, it became possible for Samuel to seek a little more direct contact with his son, without the threat of being overwhelmed by more raw emotional experiences. However, according to Samuel, Victor was not eager to open up to meet his father's relatively new tendencies.

After the immigration, Samuel appeared to be grieving the power that he used to have in Russia, the power to help his son through his "connections." At the same time, it became an unavoidable necessity for him to relate to his son directly. For the length of his stay in the US, because of objective and subjective reasons, Samuel lost his ability to create a transitional object, namely professional and social connections,

through which to relate to Victor. Therefore, he was forced to deal with emotional components of their relationship, experiencing joys and difficulties of parenthood in an up-front way. There is a Russian saying that can be translated roughly as “It would not have turned out for better if it was not for worse,” which is applicable here, because the change in Samuel’s self-concept brought about a very powerful change in his capacity to relate to his son in a more flexible and open way. It also included reacting appropriately to developmental changes in Victor and bringing their relationship to a new level.

Speaking about Samuel’s immigration path, it is important not to confuse two related, but not interchangeable, notions of the process of letting go of the country of origin, and the adjustment process in a new country. Once again, Samuel had a strong tendency to externalize, so to speak, feelings of mastery and competency. Therefore, he determined his success in almost every enterprise solely in terms of his ability to achieve some measured goals; such as a place in a career hierarchy, a certain amount of money, and other. Combined with a leitmotif theme of always “lagging behind and not being able to catch up”, it significantly undermined his success in new and unpredictable situations in the new country through feelings of inadequacy and impotency. All of the above reduced his chances to “catch up” with other more adjusted immigrants, including his wife.

In terms of the letting go process, there were remarkable changes in his self-concept concerning his feelings of being less at home in Russia his lower level of comfort when dealing with its everyday reality and his distancing himself from what used to be of interest for him. He learned the political and, to a degree, the juridical system of the US. He enjoyed many aspects of American culture. His reaction to the events on September 11th revealed that he managed to develop a deep trust in the new country which was deeply shaken by the tragedy. It is possible to infer that Samuel is fully immersed in the process of letting go of his country of origin and engaged with a new reality while his professional adjustment happens between two countries.

## **Mikhail's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Mikhail is a fifty-year old male who emigrated from the western part of Ukraine ten years ago with his wife, Nadia, and their three sons. His ex-wife and his 30-year old daughter, by the first marriage, also live in the US. Mikhail is a professional pianist with a degree in composing. In spite of many difficulties in finding stable and decently paid employment, Mikhail is very persistent in remaining a musician in the US. He plays occasional concerts and works as an accompanist during various events in a large Russian community in Brooklyn. His 24-year old son is a student in a medical school and lives on the West Coast. His 21-year old son lives with them and attends a community college, and his 16-year old son is a high school student. Nadia works in a beauty salon and she is the main breadwinner in the family, because Mikhail's earnings are too sporadic to provide them with a steady income.

Mikhail, out of all the participants, concentrated on his parents the most. Both of them are deceased now; his mother passed away about three years ago, and his father died when Mikhail was in his late twenties. They, however, still appeared to be incredibly influential in his current life, he never stopped bringing them up in the context of the character traits he inherited from his father, or the way his mother interacted with his wife, etc. Mikhail and his younger brother grew up in a small town in West Ukraine. His mother was a physician and his father, who was a math teacher in a university, gave up a musical career early on for the sake of acquiring a more practical profession. Mikhail's brother was born six years later, and there were some concerns about his physical and, according to Mikhail, mental health. He has always been treated as a sick child by his family and that, in Mikhail's opinion, formed him into a bad person. Mikhail mentioned several incidents during which his brother was proven to be a dishonest and disloyal person towards his family and towards Mikhail in particular. In Mikhail's recollection, they were not close as children, either.

Mikhail described himself as a good and eager student. He finished high school with honors, all while studying for his undergraduate degree in music. After completing school, he received an undergraduate degree in engineering, but he also wanted to continue his music education, which was encouraged by his father, in spite of a common opinion that music did not constitute a suitable career. At that period of his

life, in his late teens – yearly twenties, Mikhail eagerly looked for his parents’ advice on what his professional path should be. Mikhail is still very thankful to his father, who allowed him freedom of choice, while encouraging him to pursue his passion for music. He started his attempts to get into the Conservatorium, which was a “forbidden” territory for Jews in West Ukraine. All in all, it took him eleven years to pass the entrance exam, even though he already was a well-known musician in professional circles. After a few of those attempts, he created an eccentric commotion in the Conservatorium, in order to make it known to the public the way the Conservatorium staff treated a minority.

Mikhail described himself as a very moral young man, so when he found out that one of his girlfriends was pregnant with his child, he decided to marry her, even though he was “more” in love with a different girlfriend. According to him, his father approved of that as a manly step, while his mother was desperately against that marriage. As Mikhail found out later, his wife-to-be was probably not pregnant at that time, but they had a child very soon after. When his daughter was born, he became a devoted father and spent all his time with her, taking her on trips with him when he was going back and forth between Ukraine and the eastern part on the Soviet Union, where his wife’s extended family lived. Their marriage was not particularly strong, and while Mikhail wanted to keep the relationship going for the sake of his daughter, his wife felt that the girl should be with her own parents, while she herself attended medical school in another city. A custody battle lasted until the girl was five, at which point she was taken away from Mikhail, and her maternal grandparents took over her care. According to Mikhail, he was devastated, and he desperately “needed” another child to substitute for his daughter. He soon met and married his second wife, Nadia, with whom he had his first son a year later.

After eleven attempts, Mikhail eventually entered the Conservatorium, and finished it with a degree in composing. Even though he did not consider himself a composer, he needed this degree in order to have the freedom not to be officially employed. According to the Soviet’s Constitution, if a person was not psychically or mentally disabled, he or she had to work. Not working was considered to be a felony, and it was punishable by up to two years in prison. A degree in composing gave Mikhail an

opportunity to work odd jobs as a musician, without keeping an official record of it. If questioned, he could always say that he was working as a free-lance composer, which was allowed by the government. In spite of all his eagerness to provide for his growing family, Mikhail was not willing to give up music, so he ended up relying on his wife to provide a stable income. Their economic difficulties were quite severe, at times the whole family had to be on a very limited diet of potato and eggs. Mikhail recalled that sometimes relatives or friends brought his children oranges or bananas as holiday presents.

Economic difficulties were the major reason why Mikhail's family decided to immigrate, even though he has always been at odds with the Soviet political regime. Mikhail described the decision-making process as a pure agony for him because he was so attached to his city and to his house. He was also extremely uneasy about the possibilities of a musical career in the US, the rumors he kept hearing were about prominent Russian musicians working at gas stations or as bartenders. His choice of immigrating to the US was determined by the fact that some of his extended family was already here, and also because there was a constant war or threat of war in Israel. Mikhail was not willing to put his children in danger, in that regard, especially after one of the important reasons for his family to emigrate was for his boys to avoid the Soviet army mandatory draft.

Mikhail divided his immigration path into two periods – the first two weeks and everything else. It took him two weeks to get oriented, and to find out that it would be possible for him to maintain his identity as a musician and to support his family to some extent. Being incredibly social, he quickly acquired numerous connections within the Brooklyn Russian community, enough to have a small but relatively stable stream of job offers.

Mikhail acknowledged adoring his children only up until they were about seven-eight years old, that was while they were fully dependent on him. He enjoyed taking complete care of them during these years. As soon as the absolute dependency of the early years stopped, he wanted another child. Several times throughout the interview, he expressed regret about the past sixteen years, which he spent without having another

child. He persistently joked about having twins as the dream of his life. Meanwhile he characterized his current relationships with his sons as bumpy. He described himself as a very strict father in terms of demanding attention and respect from them for the older generation. Mikhail recalled, with great pain, his extended family's decision that his elderly mother should live separately from them. He did not want to take any part in the process of moving her into a different apartment, and he felt that the connection between generations was severed by that step. His children did not have a chance to know and respect the older generation the way he had learned to respect them when his two grandmothers lived with his parents.

Mikhail also expressed disappointment with the relationship he has with his oldest son. He felt that the turning point for the worst happened when, after a few years in the US, his son called the police on him when they had a fight over the boy's extensive use of the phone. In the process of fighting, Mikhail slammed the receiver, and the boy accused him of physical abuse. He felt betrayed and, until now, he is unwilling to forgive his son for involving police in their family matters. At the present time, Mikhail does not feel particularly close to his son, although he helps him out financially regularly, while his son is trying to support himself through part-time jobs in addition to his medical school's busy schedule.

Mikhail stays involved with his younger sons' education. He expressed some concerns, although in a humorous form, about his middle son's lack of academic strivings, compared to the rest of his children. He also continuously hires tutors for his younger son, to strengthen his academic skills in order for him to get into a better college. In general, Mikhail talked about his children's growth only as it was related to some events or milestones in his own life. A theme that was frequently present in his narrative, in relation to his children, was his surprise at the intensity of his sons' dating activity and their early, relatively to his, age of becoming apparently sexually active. Another theme was Mikhail's major concern for his children to remember their cultural and familial roots. In spite of his efforts, there was a sense of emotional distance between him and his children as he openly spoke about a mutual lack of warmth and relatedness between them, and his concern whether they even would be there, as adults, in case he needs them should his health suddenly decline.

Mikhail's account of his current marriage was a mixture of fondness and acknowledgment of some undifferentiated difficulties in the relationship, which he tends to "process" by giving his wife a silent treatment for weeks at a time. His daughter by the first marriage, who is a frequent guest at his house, noticed and brought to his attention, the gloomy atmosphere that is evoked by his behavior during these arguments. Mikhail, however, is unwilling to change anything in this regard. In fact, the absence of change has been the most frequent theme in his narrative, especially concerning the way he managed to preserve his identity in the immigration process. He has visited Ukraine several times, and one of the reasons for his trips was to demonstrate to people who knew him that he has not changed. During those trips, one of the strongest sentiments Mikhail experienced was a sense of pity and compassion for his acquaintances who were often very poor. In addition, he experienced frustration about his inability to help them on a larger scale, only to bring gifts and food. He mentioned several times that others frequently described him as the "last romantic" and a kind person, both of which Mikhail feels he inherited from his father who, many years after his death, continues to be the major influence in his life.

Outside of the Russian community, Mikhail does not have that many professional or personal connections. He ventured out a few times when giving concerts with several American musicians, but there was an incident, which he described in vague terms as related to him expressing his disdain towards people of a different sexual orientation who, allegedly, dominate and rule musical culture in New York. That episode ended up with Mikhail spending a few days in a police precinct and becoming much more cautious in his verbal expression, but not in his beliefs. All in all, he compares his life in the US with being on a continuous vacation and toys with the idea of retiring many years from now and moving back to his country of origin while being supported by his children.

## Mikhail's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes

### “For other people to see that I have not changed”

#### Leitmotiv

When we first came to this country, it took me ten or twenty days... to figure out that nothing has changed in my life. (P.27)

(How did you and your wife react to your children's growing separation?)  
But there is no separation! (P.32)

There are many people who left, became rich, and forgot where they come from. I feel very uncomfortable that I did not send anything [to acquaintances in Ukraine]. They probably think that I became one of those - rich and forgetful. (P.55)

The theme of stability and lack of change was a frequent refrain in Mikhail's narrative. To some extent it pertained to his relationships with his children, when he saw two major qualitative periods in relationships - before seven and after seven years of age. Everything else was noted by him only in relation to his momentum, his impressions, and his opinions, rather than in relation to his children's development. The idea of lack of change was even more prominent in his attitude toward immigration, when it appeared that the mission of his life became not to change, to remain the same for himself and also for some mythical friend, because he acknowledged many times that he did not have actual friends. One can speculate that such rigorous insistence on absence of change may be rooted in fear of change and development, when change at some point of his development became equal to losing himself, his identity. If his sense of self-concept and core identity is somewhat shaky and unstable, Mikhail would not only need for his core roles to remain stable, but also it is essential for him to have others reflect back to him that he remains who he was.

#### Transitions

##### Transition into parenthood

(How did you make a decision to have kids?) It depends on who would call first to tell me she was a little pregnant. Well, not really, I am a serious guy. I always want to have children. Because I love little children. (P.5)

The girlfriend I loved got married, and I was in a very uncertain frame of mind, which I hate. So when I learned that someone was a little pregnant by me, it was like a solution. (P.52)

When she called me and told me that she was pregnant, I went into a stupor for three days...I got married and in nine-ten months she gave birth. [Smiling] What is the difference? She probably got scared, although why get scared if it's clear that I was a gentleman. I would've married everyone who was pregnant by me, but you couldn't do it back then. (P.7)

I could not have children by myself; therefore, I had to find a person. (When did you first feel like a father?) During seventh-eighth month [of pregnancy] when I felt and knew that there was really a child there... Even my dad sent me a letter, in which he said that nobody expected me to be such a father. One cannot have too many happy moments in one's life, but among those I have these four times when my children were born. (P.5)

In the first quote, Mikhail used the present tense when expressing his desire to have children. It was an ever-present theme in his narrative that described his chronic readiness to have children. Mikhail was quite young, even according to the standards of his country at that time, when he first became a father, and the news of his girlfriend's pregnancy was startling for him, but he did not express hesitation in his decision to get married or to have the child. The theme of him not being able to bear uncertainty would reemerge later on in his narrative, around the time of another, life-altering decision. There were a few other male participants who expressed readiness when facing the decision to have children. However, his readiness had such urgency to it, that it makes him regret his inability to have children by himself. It also may give away a certain level of undifferentiating when it comes to the baby-bearing objects, the women. Only one other participant, and none of the male participants, mentioned the period of pregnancy as the first time of feeling like a parent. Lack of visual stimulation and the absence of a child to take care of, probably contributed to this tendency. It appeared that Mikhail's strong desire to have children personalized his wife's growing belly enough for him to imagine a child inside of it and to get attached to it.

#### Early childhood transitions

I did not have a baby carriage so I just carried her in a blanket during my walks with her. All proud macho men were staring me down but I did not give a shit. I was finishing up at the university, I already started to work,

but my child came first. ...I was very happy. I took her on all my trips home. ...Same thing with my son. We did not have enough breast milk, so I had to get up at 6 o'clock to buy what he needed, had to take two buses. ...I remember everything, when she started to walk, when she started to talk, when she hit her tooth against a heater. I could not sleep all night, I was so worried. Or when we went snow sledding, and my older son hit his forehead. Horrible things. (Pp.9-10)

When they were little, they peed on me, they pooped on me, I cleaned them up, and I was ecstatic. Threw them up to the ceiling. (P.26)

When I went on my frequent trips to Moscow, when they were little, I used to bring so many toys. My mom used to yell at me, how I could spend so much money on toys.... But it was unforgettable how I poured all those toys on a carpet, and they crawled in them. ..I stood in those huge lines to get those toys, but it was so much fun for them, I was happy myself. (P.16)

This was probably one of the most affectionate accounts of participants' early stages of parenthood. In fact, Mikhail's account of the earliest stages was substantially more vivid and detailed compared to his quite vague description of his current relationships with his children. This participant used many terms that underlined the visceral quality of his early experiences with his children, when the dependency and the contact had very direct, bodily, components to them. One can speculate that Mikhail's attachment to his sons and a daughter constituted a concrete physical connection that faded as soon as more symbolic mechanisms of relating were supposed to come into the picture, but failed to do so. In a way, this style of relationships was directly the opposite of another participant; Samuel's quality of interactions with his son when he started to relate well to the boy, only after the medium of language became accessible. It is possible that Mikhail's lack of friendships in the presence of numerous romantic involvements and professional relationships, was determined by him being at ease with concrete representations of relationships, be it sexuality or professional connections, while having difficulties with a more abstract and non-objectified core of friendship.

Boys until they turn 5-6 and girls until 8-9 - after that age, I cool off. I am not the worst father ever, I still worry about them, arrange for their education, their vacations, etc.... If I could have children without women, I would be happy to, because I had problems with the custody over my daughter. ...It was horrible, and nobody looked into the fact that I spent five years with her, the last three years on my own, because my wife went to medical school in a different city. (P.3)

The experience of going through the custody battle in a system that clearly favored the maternal side, and losing this battle, was incredibly traumatic, especially taking in account the immediacy and intensity of Mikhail's attachment to his little daughter. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether his tendency to appear not particularly differentiated about his partners, which was noted earlier in this analysis, was intrinsic to this participant or was an aftermath of that trauma.

(Was there a difference between your ways of being with older kids when they were little, compared to younger kids?) I was the same with everyone. When the second one was born, three years after the first one, I was already forgetting my ways with him. With the five-year difference, I forgot, too. I thought that I might be different with the next one, but I was the same – crazy about them. (P.32)

Mikhail's attachment to his children appeared to be static in the way he described it. He not only used the same terms but also at times it was difficult to distinguish which child's early years he was describing, because all of it went under the same umbrella of "when they were little." This participant was able to reflect on the absence of change in this area, even though his insistence on stability was not as intentional as it was in his immigration path.

#### Latency transitions

I wanted to make Dustin Hoffman out of him. His mother did not let me. He took dance classes for ten years; three years he spent taking drawing classes. He was very good in music. I saw how much he hated math. He was into arts, he was creative...I knew he was not particularly brainy, so why not give yourself to others as an artist. But everybody shushed me down, saying that it was not a practical profession in America. (P.19)

As soon as we arrived here, I bought a video console, the kind they wanted all the time in Ukraine, but we could not afford it. They were crazy about it, they spent twenty hours a day playing; they were ruining their sight. To tell you the truth, I never knew how to play, had never been interested. (P.27)

The above quotes are the only two recounting the latency period of Mikhail's children. With that said, there was nothing that characterized that time from the point of view of his children's development, one would just have to count the years, in order to place these quotes in time. Mikhail remained a devoted father during that period, even though he apparently enjoyed his fatherhood less, compared to the earlier stage. He not only wanted to provide for his children, but also took pleasure in them enjoying his

presents. Mikhail was seemingly attentive to his youngest son's aptitude and natural gifts, he helped him to develop them. At the same time, this participant, when talking about his children, consistently slipped into talking about himself, even though my questions were phrased in such a way to focus his attention on his children. He was utterly unable to talk about them at any length of time, without switching the conversation to his own persona, and ending up talking about himself. For the reason that nothing remarkable happened or changed in his world at that time, he had almost nothing to say about his children's latency transitions, as if there were none.

#### First stage of immigration: decision-making

I was so scared, everybody wrote in their letters that great musicians here play on subway platforms, and that I should be happy if lucky enough to find a job at a gas station. (Was it you who made a decision to immigrate?) Well, it was necessary. Mostly because of the kids, you know, the Soviet Army. Everybody was moving, so it was inertia to a certain degree. In addition, that terrible feeling of saying good-bue to people at the airports, after which you come home not in your right mind. I never chased that American dream. I had always been happy with what I had, because I don't need much. ...But I knew that my kids needed education, and even if I was enough of a hero to try getting into the Conservatorium for eleven years in a row, why should they need to go through the same loops. (P. 4)

During the last days I was impatient, I wanted it [immigration] to happen already. (P.51)

Interestingly enough, it appeared that not to immigrate for Mikhail at that period of time, was almost more difficult than to immigrate. The inertia of the moment when everybody was leaving, combined with economical difficulties, created a situation under which not to immigrate was to go against the mainstream, and against the public common sense. Similarly to German's wish not to be judged as stupid if he missed that chance for new opportunities, for Mikhail it was too much of a responsibility not to try for his children to avoid what he went through in terms of getting education. Also making and finalizing the decision to immigrate allowed Mikhail eventually to escape the tormenting uncertainty of the moment. We have learned from his description of the decision-making concerning having children, of how difficult it was for Mikhail to carry on with his life when any situation of uncertainty comes about.

It was emotionally difficult to sell books that I gathered all my life; to say goodbye to the house and to the garden. ..At least, my kids got to spend some time with nature, they could breathe in clean air, could run around, and see birds, squirrels... (What did Nadia think about immigration at that time?) I was the captain of that ship! I've always been making almost all the decisions. Although, here it is true to a lesser extent. (Pp.17-18)

I was distraught for almost a year prior to immigration. I obsessed over the thought that I would turn into a piece of shit here, and my kids would blame me for bringing them here. (P.13)

My classmates invited me to the West Coast, but I decided to go to New York where the family was. When you immigrate at an advanced age, you need to be with your extended family. (P.11)

Mikhail was capable of acknowledging his strong ambivalence and fears regarding immigration and not having control in a new country, fears that were even more aggravated by carrying full responsibility for making this decision, at least in his own perception. It appeared that, without concrete and palpable cues about what his position might be in the US, he ended up imagining the worst possible scenario and reacting to it. This tendency might occur due to this participant's subconscious anxiety about his ability to sustain his self-concept, his feeling of continuous self, under changed circumstances. His dread of losing himself became concretely reflected in his fear of becoming a bartender or a waiter, the occupation most remote from his concept of himself as a person and as a musician. Mikhail's wish to be with his extended family could be his attempt to counteract his fear of the unknown by recapitulating some of his experiences of being with his family, with his father in particular.

#### Second stage of immigration: first steps in the new country

In a week, I got my first job through a guy that I knew, I earned my first three hundred dollars, and from then on everything started. (Do you remember your first impressions?) My relatives put us up for a week. It was difficult. After two weeks, I learned that you could do whatever you want here without crossing the law. And I relaxed and came back to life. (P.13)

(Could you divide your immigrating path into any stages?) Yes, sure, the first two weeks and everything else. (P.21)

In two weeks I figured that this country was like a vacation retreat; that I would not have to be a barman, or a waiter, or a doorman that has to smile

to please rich people. I figured it would be possible to do nothing as it was in my old country, meaning to lead a beautiful and happy life. (P.27)  
Everything became clear. (P.49)

Mikhail was able to acknowledge and experience ambivalence about immigration, but not for a long time. During the next stage, he felt a need to repair everything and see everything, if not in a fully positive, then in at least a steady and unambiguous light. Even with participants, like Tatiana, who relatively quickly established some transitional stable space between two countries and inhabited it, this process took a substantially longer period of time, usually way beyond their first steps in the new country. Mikhail's urge to see the US as a livable and unambiguous place, was so overriding, as if it indicated his survival. His urgency gave us a glimpse into the extent of his fears of losing himself to uncertainty and ambivalence toward the new country. In addition, Mikhail's tendency to divide his immigration path into two stages – the first two weeks and everything else, was reminiscent of his tendency to divide his parenthood into his children's early years and everything else. In both cases, it provided Mikhail with a very settled framework, saving him from the anxieties of a flexible, thus less predictable, processes of parenting and immigration.

### Adolescent transitions

In two years after our arrival, they became comfortable here with the language and everything, they acquired friends, different interests, and money. They are interested in money, and not in their family history, not in what their grandma and grandpa were. They forgot very soon how they enjoyed those fried eggs or an orange. (What did you do about it?) I voice my opinion, but they don't care, they don't take my stance seriously. ...I am beating the same dead horse in a false hope that they wake up one day. Or maybe not so false, because my father also called me ungrateful and everything, but I turned out ok – sensitive and decent. (P.26)

He called police on me. I was expecting a business call, and he would not get off the phone. I asked him several times, and then I went to a store. When I came back, he was still on a phone. I became mad and threw that phone in the air, ripping out all the wiring. He ran out and came back with police. All the kids confirmed that I did no hit anyone, but threw a phone...I still cannot let it go. (P.22)

(Did you notice any changes in them when they became teenagers?) I am with them all the time so I did not notice anything. Maybe with the

youngest one – he suddenly became the tallest. Even my mom told me once that he was going to be the most healthy and handsome out of all of them. Handsome is not important for a boy, but he is the tallest. (P.27)

My attempts to find quotes that would describe the adolescent transitions of Mikhail's children were as painstaking as they were with their latency transitions. To my direct questions, he responded that he never noticed any changes. The first two quotes depict Mikhail's children roughly during the adolescent years of the two older ones, but one could not guess the age of the children described in it unless computation is done. Even though he perceived the incident with police as the major betrayal of him, still his main accusation against his children, was that they were not interested in the family history, and that accusation was dated back into their adolescence, but Mikhail appeared to be clueless about the probable developmental underpinning of their lack of interest in their parents and grandparents. He mentioned some changes that began with their adjustment to the new country, but, as opposed to German who understood similar changes in his children, as part of their separation as well as their adjustment process, Mikhail connected those changes to them just forgetting their old country and their familial heritage. It seemed that he projected his fears of change onto them, thus, creating unrealistic expectations and demands that were bound to fail.

#### Advanced stage of immigration

They kicked out the grandma in six months. I didn't take any part of that. I forbade them. All relatives gathered and packed her stuff, and rented an apartment for her. I told them that I was against moving my mother out. Nobody listened, they insisted that she should have her own place and that it would be better for everybody...I remember them renting a car, moving furniture out. I didn't lift a finger, on principal. (P.23)

The theme of Mikhail losing his control and power in his own family started to appear early in the immigration process and became more pronounced with time. Even earlier, he acknowledged that he used to be a "captain of that ship," but not any more, or at least, not to that extent. Mikhail's objections to the idea of finding his mother her own place to live did not influence the family's decision to move her out. We do not have enough information to even speculate why such change in family power occurred, but we do know that Mikhail was painfully aware of it.

(When did you come visit Ukraine for the first time?) After five years, no, wait, three years after immigrating here. And then I went again in six months. I have not been there for many years. My mom was sick and dying, I couldn't go. Every time I promise people, and I don't keep my promises, and they think I became corrupt here and forgot them. But I didn't, and I know that I need to visit in order for them to know that I didn't become a spoiled brat. I want to help them, to bring some joy in their lives. (P.15)

(How did you feel about your level of English language, did you notice any change in this regard?) No, everything stays the same. I knew it from college. However, all newspapers, TV, etc, all in Russian. If you can't make a joke in this language, well...When I watch movies, I get upset because I am not getting the nuances, the humor...But that's ok, I made piece with that. As long as there are enough Russian women [Smiling]. (P.21)

I was learning just a little bit because I wanted to find myself professionally. I've learned that my huge energy doesn't matter, and you need connections.... I really was not particularly successful. But you can't help but to be thankful, because it is still a resort, a vacation. (P.49)

Mikhail's fear and rejection of change was so profound that, when he noticed and acknowledged some transformation of his self-concept, he had to both minimize it and justify it by some objective need. In all other areas, this participant insisted on the absence of change, and this absence of change should be registered by others, by his acquaintances in his homeland, in order for him to maintain his sense of self-continuity. His account of his level of English language is similar to another participant, Lena's account of her difficulties with language. Both of them expressed dissatisfaction with their language mastery, and, in spite of their attempts to become more fluent, they feel stuck in terms of their language development. In Mikhail's narrative, this tendency was even more pronounced because he, as opposed to Lena, was not new to English language when he first arrived. As a parallel process, Lena felt stuck in her immigration path as well. Mikhail did not express a similar sentiment, possibly because his level of expectations for himself were defensively lowered to begin with.

(What was your reaction to 9/11 events?) I became like crazy, other people saw me this way. Second time around I was in a similar state when Vladimir Klyachko lost two days ago. Not the same, but Nadia saw me running, spitting on the floor, leaving the house, just like then. 9/11 – I felt such rage...People's reaction I compared, even though I was not there, with people's feelings on June 22 [beginning of World War II] when people didn't expect it. (P.49)

Once again, other people seeing Mikhail reacting was almost as important to him as the reaction itself. This participant understands the non-compatibility of the two mentioned events, but he saw similarities in his reactions in terms of the rage he immediately felt. It was remarkable that his first association, when I asked him about 9/11 events, was to compare it with a boxing match between a Ukrainian and an American athlete, in which an American athlete won, mostly by chance, and lost in terms of public opinion. It was as if Mikhail felt an urge to counteract his sympathy to the American tragedy, by his scorn for an American athlete and sports judges. Then he immediately needed to undo this contrast, by bringing in the theme of World War II, which is still a sacred topic for him, and comparing it to the 9/11 attack, thus, in a way, proving his loyalty, after revealing the conflicted nature of it.

#### Current relationships with children: young adulthood transition

I am worried about the youngest one; we need to hire a tutor. The middle one is flying somewhere, I think, to Mexico tomorrow with his girlfriend. (P.3)

They don't need me any more. They are all grown up, they are independent. (P.9)

[Told a story of his middle son getting sick with a virus that he supposedly "brought" from his vacation] I brought this doctor and that doctor, and they eventually diagnosed him correctly. But I still blame him. When I tell him to be careful and cautious about his health I tell him that, because of him, I could not spend the last days by my mother's deathbed. She died two days later. (P.10)

It appeared that even though Mikhail claimed to "give up" on his strong attachment to his children after they turned eight, there is still a strong but unacknowledged and unprocessed bond between him and his children. He may be much more attached to them than he realizes, and because they surely show significant signs of separation from him, Mikhail experiences it as narcissistic insult. He does not want to be attached to someone stronger than this person is attached to him, which is often characteristic of late adolescence – the young adulthood stage of development, when parents tend to occupy a much lower place than before in terms of their apparent significance in growing children's lives. Mikhail's statement, in the last quote, acknowledged that he

openly blamed his son for being an obstacle between him and his dying mother, which served as an example of his attempt to get even, to evoke emotional discomfort and guilt in his son for leaving him behind.

When his friends are coming over, I always bring them some snacks upstairs. He bawls out at me, asking me not to get into all my Russian stuff. I still do it, yea, Russian style. Why, they are like wild cubs, don't know that if a guest comes over, you're supposed to treat. (P.24)

Mikhail's strong ambivalence about American culture, in combination with his disappointment about his children not needing him as much as he would like them to, became reflected in him forcing food onto his son and the boy's friends. It appeared that Mikhail has a wish to relate, but he is not able to relate on a more symbolic level, therefore he ends up attempting to literally feed them, and reinforce the Russian culture of hospitality, regardless of their reaction.

I was looking for something in his [middle son's] drawer, and I found condoms everywhere. What's up with that? I told Nadia afterwards, I am fine with dating and stuff but why are condoms everywhere? She said that I should not go through their drawers, and that it's better that he is at home with a good girl. Look at her! (P.28)

Other husbands bring lots of money but so what, it means that they have less time to devote to their families. If something happens, I am here, I go to school, and I find a doctor. Thank God, nothing happens. (P.17)

Interestingly enough, even though it was substantially easier for Mikhail to relate to everybody, including his children, on a rather concrete level, he found it difficult to accept the concrete evidence of his son being sexually active. Apparently, denial of his son's launching into adulthood served a defensive purpose of preserving his role as a father in a way he understood it and maintaining his hopes that one day he might be powerfully needed and appreciated again.

He worked part time in some nightclubs in Manhattan. Five or six teenagers started a fight with his friend and him. His jaw almost got broken. After that he started to go to a gym, so it benefited him. He became stronger, it forged his character. But – he has nothing to do with me, because he is not interested in anything. (P.20)

She [Nadia] has more of a soul contact with them, compared to me... What hugs or kind words you're talking about, nothing like that. I am harsh, I am demanding. Sometimes I reproach myself for that. (P.32)

There were brief moments in Mikhail's narrative when he appeared to enjoy and welcome his children's growth and independence, e.g., when his adult daughter stayed

over and expressed her opinion about his current marriage; when his youngest son suddenly became the tallest one in the family; or when his middle son became more masculine and physically stronger. At the same time, there was also a resentment that became reflected sometimes in unkindness, as it was in the quote about his middle son getting beaten up, which “benefited” him. There was also an attitude of open hostility towards his oldest son, the one who initiated the incident with the police, which could painfully remind Mikhail of his younger brother whom he despised for his tendency to betray his own family. In general, the number of times Mikhail mentioned his adult daughter by the first marriage or his oldest son, both of whom did not live with him any more, was very small. It appeared that without them being around and dependent on him in some concrete way, their connection became faded. A more symbolic connection that would allow Mikhail to enjoy and take pride in his adult children’s development and achievements seemed not to take place, therefore bitterness of loss without gain colored his current relationships with his children.

#### Current stage of immigration

(What is happening now in your life?) Nothing is changing. I am a professional slacker. Yesterday I made my next attempt to find part-time employment. (P.1)

My dad was right, the more you give people, the happier you are. I am one of the luckiest. I play concerts, I see people happy and I am happy myself.... Old folks were very happy yesterday. (P.16)

I still have the same college level English that I had in 1968 even though I always take English textbooks and newspapers with me on the subway. But then I think, why should I deny myself the pleasure of reading a newspaper in Russian. (P.15)

At the very beginning of his narrative, Mikhail indirectly defined his life path and his goal as staying true to himself and proving to others that he remained true to himself. Even though his narrative style was incredibly jumpy and erratic, he still managed to convey a remarkable absence of change in every area of his life. All these years, both before and after immigration, Mikhail considered his employment as somehow “not real,” not serious, or regular, or a decent type of job. It appeared that, on a superficial level, Mikhail internalized some of the attitude of others about being a

musician as a hobby or fun, and not a respectable occupation for a man. All his life until now, he continues to define himself half jokingly as a “slacker” and a freeloader. When questioned about his use of these terms as self-definitions, he compared himself to others who work full-time and earn large incomes. With that said, Mikhail was also very consistent in describing the great pleasure and satisfaction he derives from his job, and his stance in that regard had never changed, either. Mikhail’s relationship with the English language remained the same throughout his immigration experience. Not only did he relate no improvement in his language fluency, he also remained as conflicted as he was at the earlier immigration stages about the purpose of English language acquisition. His loyalty conflict between two languages was expressed in the belief that his efforts in learning English cancel out his opportunity to enjoy the Russian language and a part of culture available through it.

The anniversary of our victory in WWII and the anniversary of the Jewish genocide in Ukraine are both sacred dates for me when I give many charity concerts. Nadia complains, but she gets it, I tell her off very harshly. Even if only one mother shall live, the mother whose child was killed in a pit, I will be giving these concerts. Yea, I am funny and gentle, and everything, but only up to a point. I really tell her off! (P.7)

These are very rapid changes – yea, I am kind and all goody-goody, and then I am very ...abrasive. Because it is always with me, memory about my parents and grandparents, generational memory. (P.8)

My homeland is where I was born, and I feel the pull of it. I am not a Ukrainian patriot, my family suffered enough from pogroms and that is not why I am not becoming US citizen. I just want to be honest with that; I do not feel like I should [become a US citizen]. (P.14)

One of the plausible explanations for Mikhail’s unwillingness to adjust and change, as a response to any kind of circumstances, is that he conceptualized his role as preserving traditions and keeping intergenerational memory alive. It appeared that the only way he thought he could succeed in this task was to stay unchanged. To stay unchanged meant that Mikhail could not be fully devoted to Ukraine, the country that failed to defend his grandparents. Staying true to family traditions also meant doing what needed to be done to ensure his children’s future, which entailed immigration, all while making sure that they know where they are coming from in terms of their cultural and national roots. Mikhail did not have a well thought through explanation as to why

he did not want to become a US citizen, but it did not feel right by him to make that next step, which would signify for him letting down his guard and beginning to melt into a different society, not related to his cultural past.

To summarize major trends in Mikhail's journey of navigating both parenthood and immigration, I want to note several tendencies that were especially pronounced in his narrative. The decision-making processes during both major life transitions were similar in terms of Mikhail's low frustration tolerance when faced with a situation of uncertainty and life-altering choices. He preferred to act in order to avoid the anxiety of contemplating different options. Mikhail also appeared to be very resolute in terms of dividing his immigration and parenthood into two sections respectively. One week and everything else became Mikhail's division for his immigration path; and seven years and everything else, was his definition of the peculiarities of his parenthood experience. Those divisions allowed Mikhail to respond, to some degree, to the demands of a changing situation, while largely preserving his self-concept unchanged, and keeping the ambivalence of the letting go process to the bare minimum.

Mikhail's inability to feel close to his children, unless through concrete physical connection and dependency, led to a situation where Mikhail was in a way forced to separate from his children very early – during their latency stages. Lacking the ability to bring their connection to a new, more symbolic level, this participant had to re-create a close physical connection through new children, or through the fantasy of new children. Mikhail's immigration path was characterized by initial panic and despair that, according to him, disappeared after two weeks in the country. Since then, he has reported a good level of comfort, and he praised himself for staying true to his old self in regard to his relationship with his country of origin. The absence of change in his self-concept was remarkable, and even though Mikhail managed to keep quite a distant relationship with his new country, he expressed satisfaction with where he was at in his immigration path. The versatile cultural tapestry of his new country allowed him to find a place where he felt remarkably comfortable with his unchanged self. Mikhail's relationships with his children were more problematic because the absence of change in

his understanding his role as a parent, pre-determined the loss of close attachment, without the gain of more symbolic relationships with his adult children.

## **German's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

German is a forty-seven year old male who emigrated from Kazakhstan seven years ago with his wife of twenty-two years and their two children. His son is now eighteen years old and he is contemplating dropping out of high school, but does not have any definite career plans. His daughter is fifteen years old and, reportedly, she is a good student with a variety of interests outside of school, especially in the sphere of economics and finance, which are the areas of German's expertise and interest as well. He works in a computer department of a large financial company, which is a relatively new occupation for him. German's wife works part-time as a home health aid.

German and his older sister were born and raised in a large urban city in Kazakhstan, where their family was in a privileged position, as the Russian-speaking majority, in contrast to the native population. German was not particularly wordy about his paternal family, but he managed to convey a sense of deep respect and connection to them. In particular, his consideration of the needs of his extended family played a major role in his decision making about immigration.

German received his college degree in construction engineering, and was employed in this area for several years. With the start of economical changes in Kazakhstan that were determined by Perestroika in the Soviet Union, German started a private construction firm. He enjoyed managing a relatively large independent enterprise, which allowed him to learn the financial, managerial, and industrial aspects of a small business. A few years later, he switched to a retail business, where his position was related more to the purely financial aspects of retail. German's involvement with commerce allowed him to lead a relatively comfortable life on a substantially better economical level, compared to the poor majority of the population in Kazakhstan at that time. For example, when he met and married his wife, they had an opportunity to travel extensively to different Soviet Union republics, a rare commodity for the general public.

When German had married his wife, they did not have children for about three years, so they had some time to adjust to each other. The decision to have children came naturally to German. He spoke about the babyhood of his first son with great fondness. German described him as having his own opinion about everything from early on, and insisting on his own ways of doing things. His wife stayed home for about a year and a

half taking care of the baby, and then he went to day care. German described that transition as a relatively easy one for his son, because he was a very social child who enjoyed the company of others and was liked by other children. When their son was three years old, their daughter was born and again German's wife stayed home as the primary caregiver for about two years.

When German's son started school, it became clear right away for both parents that the boy had trouble comprehending school material. German acknowledged that even though his son appears to be quite intelligent, it has always been difficult for him to utilize his abilities at school. German's wife spent a lot of time tutoring him in different subjects, but with little success. In contrast to his son, German's daughter has always been a good student, active and motivated, both in schoolwork and in extracurricular activities. He also described her as the most talkative in his family, while his son can go for days at a time without saying a word to anybody.

German's extended family immigrated to the US several years prior to him. While he was not particularly eager to follow their footsteps, because he was financially well off and very involved with his business, he felt that it was better to use an opportunity to immigrate and see whether he was going to like it than not to use that opportunity and later on regret that. In addition, German's father was seriously ill, and medical science was known to be much more advanced in the US, compared to Kazakhstan. German planned to immigrate for a short period of time. He wanted to become a green card holder with an opportunity to come back to the US when he or his children would wish to, but to live in Kazakhstan. As it was planned, German's family came to New York, and after a couple of months, he went back to his city of origin to continue working in his firm. He went to Kazakhstan twice for four months during his first year of immigration, with only a short period of staying in New York in-between his trips. German would have probably continued with his visits, but when he came back to New York the second time around, an immigration officer withheld his travel passport and warned him against his frequent travels to the country from which he had sought refuge shortly before. German considered that situation very seriously, because he did not want

his family to be denied their right for permanent residency in the US. Therefore he decided not to travel until he got his green card.

German had to seek a means to support his family. He went to work in a factory for about two years while waiting for his green card. Even though German was substantially overqualified for that job, particularly compared to his semi-literate, according to him, co-workers, he still enjoyed his job, because it was relatively independent and he was well respected there. That job, in combination with his wife's babysitter salary, allowed them to cover their expenses. As soon as German received all the necessary documents, he visited Kazakhstan in an attempt to re-establish his business connections.

German described his third visit to Kazakhstan, which happened to be his last one for now, as the most eye-opening experience. He saw the economy of his country of origin in a very different light, compared to where it was two years before. Apparently, the economical deterioration that started when Kazakhstan pronounced its independency from the Former Soviet Union and Russia, in particular, became increasingly rapid, leaving the country in what seemed to be an irreversible state of economical collapse. It was inefficient and dangerous to try to continue with his small business, according to him. In addition to that, almost all his friends had immigrated to different countries by then, and his own family had become quite comfortable in the US. Therefore, German decided to settle down in the US, until his children become adults and could make decisions on their own. His wife was, reportedly, happy with his decision to stay in the US, because she disliked the reality of life in Kazakhstan, which felt too Oriental for her, and she felt much more adjusted in New York.

Following his friends' advice, German took an extensive course in computer programming, and with the help of his friends, found a computer programmer job fairly quickly. He worked there approximately two years, feeling somewhat shaky and unsure about the level of his expertise. However, over time he became more comfortable as his proficiency grew in that area. He lost his job due to the general downsizing of that company, and within a few weeks, he managed to find a position in a financial organization where he currently works. German likes the fact that his current job is related to finances, an area he familiarized himself with while working in his private

business in Kazakhstan. Therefore, he feels confident working in this area. He expressed some annoyance with his work schedule, which includes having irregular work hours every other week, and short vacations. German had acknowledged, however, that he is gradually getting used to these inconveniences.

Throughout the interview, German spoke about progressively getting used to the thought of his possibly permanent stay in the US. He acknowledged many advantages as well as disadvantages of living in the US, compared to his life in Kazakhstan, both as a part of the Soviet Union and as an independent country. He also made sure, through numerous repetitions, that I understood the difference between his decent financial situation at the time of immigration and that of the general population of his country of origin.

German described his children's rapidly developing level of comfort with the American society, as one of the major considerations for his decision not to go back to live in Kazakhstan. Both, his son and his daughter, acquired language very quickly, even though at the beginning, German helped them with the translation. They also reportedly enjoy their numerous friendships. When asked specifically, German spoke about their pubertal transitions, and described his son, as opposed to his daughter, as having a hard time in terms of the moodiness and emotional unavailability of his parents at that time. Even though German described his son as fairly quiet at home, the boy reportedly has many friends who value his opinion and seek his company. German shared his worries about his son's future because many of his friends were either held back or dropped out of school, and he is not a particularly eager student himself. German mentioned threatening him with the necessity to pay one-fourth of all family expenses if he decides to drop out of school. The relationship between his children is good, according to him. His daughter tends to defend her brother in family quarrels and usually takes his side. She is, reportedly, a very good student with special interest in math and finances. In general terms, German described his daughter as closer to him, and his son as more of a "mama's boy." He also described the difference in their approach to conflicts when his daughter tends to be more open to compromise and acknowledging her shortcomings, just like him, while his son usually tends to be more

stubborn. All in all, German described his family as a safe and stable entity that provides him with a sense of security and meaning.

### *German's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes*

#### **"You look at this from a different perspective"**

##### **Leitmotiv**

(Describe yourself at the period of time when you worked at the factory [during the first two years of immigration], your mood, your attitude, etc.)  
It was fine. I knew I couldn't do it any other way. I still had a hard time accepting American ways. (P.6)

My relatives did their best to show us America in the most positive light. I respect this. I am only talking about myself when I say that I am more used to the way it was in the Soviet Union. (P.6)

I restated my goals, and my perception changed as well. ..The main ideas did not change. But it all depends on that inner state of mind.... I am not very picky, and I do not chase the clouds in terms of trying to earn more, and more, and more. (P.10)

German appeared to be incredibly patient with the fact that he likes the old ways of being and living. He acknowledged his strong preference for the life style and values of the period of time before Perestroika. Yet he managed to adjust well to the market economy of an independent Kazakhstan. He also fully acknowledged his difficulty in seeing American culture and societal norms as valid and appealing. His account of rough spots in his adjustment to the US was detailed. At the same time, German had an understanding of the way he changed, in relation to his initial goal of getting a green card and going back to Kazakhstan, as soon as possible. There was a strong similarity between the main theme of his narrative and that of another participant, Inga's, when she described change as an intrinsic component of her existence in relation to immigration and raising her children. Inga celebrated change and the feeling of herself changing. German's tendency to change appeared to be stemming from the feeling that change was an inevitable and obligatory component of life, if he wanted to adjust well to the reality. Therefore, his process of changing seemed to be more laborious, compared to Inga's ego syntonic flexibility, but it still allowed him to adjust, and apparently enjoy, his state of being.

## Transitions

### Transition into parenthood

We were always sure that we would be able to have bread to put on the table tomorrow. In terms of work that was...We had a chance to travel a bit before the birth of our children. We had some time to adjust to each other. (P.7)

I was probably much more egocentric before their birth. (P.25)

(Did you have any fantasies about fatherhood?) No, I am more of a realist. But then I consider myself, and my children consider me, to be a good father (Laughing), although I have my shortcomings. (P.7)

(When did you feel like a father for the first time?) When he came home from the hospital. ...He looked very good for a newborn. He was not red and he was big. When he got a little bigger, he had those cute fair curls. ..He looks more like my wife. But, if you look hard, he looks like me, too. (P.7)

Besides this first quote, German did not mention any particularities of the initial adjustment process between him and his wife, neither did he speak in that much detail about his financial status at the time of the birth of his first child. However, from the first quote, we have a sense of him being financially stable and confident at that time. We also get a glimpse into his perception that some changes and mutual compromises were needed and inevitable at the initial stage of a relationship and marriage. Precisely because German did not appear to be particularly emotionally expressive or wordy in the interview process, occasions when he did express apparent emotions, have more weight in the course of the narrative. For example, there was a lot of fondness in German's description of his newborn son. In his narrative, we were not able to observe an elaborate decision-making process about having children, but German was very emotional in welcoming his new arrival the moment he came home from the hospital, which always constituted the first meeting of a father with a child, because a father in the FSU was not allowed in the hospital to see his baby. German did not go into a detailed account of the changes in his self-concept at that period of time, but he gave us a general sense of his adjustment process to married life and of his ability to be emotionally open to his first child.

### Early childhood transitions

He was calm but very stubborn. He is still this way. He was also quite strong. It is not possible to persuade him. Until he hits the stonewall, he won't change his opinion. No persuasions, no examples work for him. If he decides to do something, he persists to the bitter end. (P.7)

My wife could have stayed for three years on maternity leave, you know, the Soviet Union's regulations, but she went back to work earlier. And we had our daughter three years later. He already attended day care at that time; he started at about 18 months. (How did he take that transition?) It was fine; he is able to communicate well. He has many friends here and over there as well. (P.8)

German's tendency to move from past tense to present was prominent throughout the interview when describing his children. It seemed that the power of his current relationships with them dominated his reflection of their relationships in retrospect as well. The last quote contains the only mentioning of his daughter's birth and early years. When German was asked about it, he again switched to their current relationship and him having an easier time with his daughter than with his son.

When he was very small, he used to make us wait near the railroad where we lived for the next train. We could not leave until a train passed by or he would cry hysterically. Sometimes we had to wait for a long time, it was not a busy line. (Laughing) As soon as the train passed by, it was fine to leave; he was content, but not before. (You did not make him leave, did you?) No, we usually tried to stay true to this ritual. (P. 8)

Even though German did not conceptualize his son's stubbornness as an appropriate developmental stage, but rather as a character trait that has persisted until now, he approached the inconveniences it created with great patience. German was willing to sacrifice some amount of time to keep his son content. In comparison to this, another participant, Tanya's, approach to a similar problem with her daughter's "wanty – don't wanty" when going for a walk, was to smack her and make her do whatever Tanya needed her to do. Just like German, Tanya felt that it was not a developmental stage, but a character trait of her daughter, which she continued to exhibit into her early adulthood. Tanya then complained about the major difficulty her daughter has as an adult in any decision-making process, which she attributed to her temperament and not to the way her earlier developmental stages were handled.

### First stage of immigration: decision-making

I was not particularly eager to come here (to the US). I understood that over there stability was non-existent in terms of the future... I was well off over there; I did not have any particular problems. (Who made the decision to emigrate?) I did. But my parents had a hard time financially surviving on their pension, although they had their savings and I could help them out...But my father had had three heart attacks, and he had a by-pass surgery here, they prolonged his life. My sister didn't have that much link to Kazakhstan, either...I can say that I lived comfortably there. Compared to the majority of the population, I had it good. (P.1)

I enjoyed making my business happen, see it developing, managing others. On the other hand, I understood damn well that there could be a short end to it all. If not for all those changes (the disintegration of the Soviet Union), I would have not left. (P.15)

In a way, I came here for the sake of my children...It was too risky over there. I was not sure of their future over there...What am I, completely stupid, not to use such an opportunity? (P.25)

Being a frequent theme among the older generation of people, immigration solely for the sake of the children, has not been a common theme among the participants of this study. Several participants mentioned the fear of mandatory draft as one of the moving forces of their decision to immigrate to the US, but in general, the reasons mentioned were more personalized to the participants themselves, and not to their children or parents. German talked about his children's future, his parents' benefit, and his sense of a lost opportunity if he had not immigrated. Even though, in his narrative, he exhibited a strong sense of agency and authorship over the course of his life, his sense of himself appeared to be more communal, incorporating his immediate and extended family, as well as the opinions of others, who could have seen him as "stupid" if he would not have seized that opportunity. He did mention his discomfort with the economical changes in the republic when it became an independent country, but he appeared to be quite confident in his ability to handle them and be financially secure. Other generations' vulnerabilities concerned him more.

I always asked Americans to imagine that they woke up one day and instead of the US, they have fifty independent countries with different languages and different currencies. Do they think they would enjoy it? (P.3)

(What do you remember from the time closer to your departure?) The only thing I remember was anguish. I was pacing in my apartment thinking that I was about to leave it... But I also had a feeling that it was better to do something and then regret it, than not do it and regret that. (P.17)

My perception of everything around me had not changed (around the time of emigration) because I thought I was going to come back. And that was the way it worked out. (P. 17)

Being the least wordy participant (the transcript of German's interview was roughly a half of the volume of all the other participants' transcripts), German still managed to convey different dimensions of his experience of decision-making on emigration, and his self-concept at that time. For example, he described himself as being fairly comfortable with economical changes during Perestroika. At the same time, he voiced deep regret about the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which happened around the time of him deciding to emigrate. Even though he claimed that his perception of his country of origin stayed the same because his emigration was not supposed to be final, it is possible that his strong reactions to Kazakhstan becoming independent were partially determined and aggravated by his decision to emigrate thus seeking justification for that at the beginning stage of the letting go process. German also was quite open to the idea and subjective experience of loss and mourning, allowing him to feel and process the emotional components of it.

#### Arrival and first steps in the new country

(How do you remember your first impressions?) It was quite beautiful around... But then I learned that the level of bureaucratic stupidity was the same as ours. For example, I had waited for my SSN for three months because they lost my papers. ..In Kazakhstan I would've handled this issue in one day, because I knew my whereabouts. Here, like an idiot, I lost three months, which, I should say, did not improve my mood. (P.2)

German gave the most detailed description of this stage, probably because it was a turning point for him in terms of his immigration path. During that time he actually decided to stay and to take on a new course of his life. At the beginning, the major theme for him was the loss of power. One can speculate that the importance of staying connected and having an infra-structure of friends/acquaintances/business partners is a cultural phenomenon, possible even more prominent in the Eastern part of the FSU and

especially important during a transitional period, e.g., Perestroika, when the governmental structure had fallen apart. Regardless of its origin, the loss of connections when he immigrated was equalized to loss of status, and subjectively felt like loss of power. Another participant, Samuel, stressed his loss of connections, as the major debilitating factor in his adjustment in a new country, a factor that he never was able to overcome. Samuel made an effort to recapture his experience of being empowered through the concrete step of going back to his country of origin in an attempt to establish connections in the FSU. German had chosen to deal with the same issue in a different way, through lowering his expectations and status and then slowly working his way up.

At the beginning there was a full rejection of everything around; I could not take anything in. That was before I went back to Kazakhstan to work, and my family stayed here. ...I went there twice, but the second time I was told that they could deport me if I were to leave one more time to the country from which I sought refuge. ...I did not want to risk it. I still hoped that as soon as I got a green card, I would leave. But then it became much worse in Kazakhstan in terms of terrorism, poverty, etc; everybody left...Three years passed before we got green cards, but then the children got adjusted here, so different factors came into the picture. (Pp.3-4)

This quote describes a turning point in German's immigration path when he was no longer able to continue with his plan and decided to adjust instead of, as it was in Samuel's case, persevering in a non-productive route. German, as opposed to Samuel, quit going back and forth between two countries, he found a job, however under skilled for him, that allowed him to support his family and to learn the spoken language, and his perception of his country of origin began to change. We could observe through his narrative how at that stage of immigration, he gradually started to gain some distance from Kazakhstan, which he did through noting more negative developments in its socio-economic and political environment.

I worked at a factory. I learned to do factory equipment. I spent two years there, moving up in terms of money and everything. I am thankful to my supervisor because he talked to me, he talked even though my English was so bad, he had to guess half of the time what I was saying...I liked it that I was my own boss there, I worked very independently. They knew they did not have to monitor me. Every single time they admired my skills at taking precise measurements...Who knew that what our children learned in the

ninth grade would be considered rocket science here. Especially they were amazed at my mental computation skills. [Laughing](P.5)

I saw the US as a relaxed society. Everybody here is making as much money as they need for their level of strivings. A factory worker made enough to live comfortably and drink beer every day. And he was amazed that I always could lend him some money, if needed, even though I was making less than him. ...I needed to work there because at that time it was the only way to go... (P.6)

Everything was so new, purely practical things, like credit cards, putting your money in the bank. Especially after in Kazakhstan we were used to carrying money in a huge backpack after the devaluation. ...There were people here that were trying to teach me that I should live off my credit cards. I listened to them and decided that there was no free cheese. (Pp.15-16)

At that point of time, German demonstrated an interesting balance between holding on to his prior critical view of the US, e.g., in terms of its education system, but also gradually starting to take in new information and new roles. In order to preserve his feelings of self-worth, while as he stated it “eating my bowl of shit...,” he had to emphasize the educational gap and socio-economic class differences between him and the factory workers. It was also important for German to preserve his critical abilities when assessing the information that was provided by well meaning, but subscribing to different values, fellow immigrants. German voiced a readiness to accept the new situation and tolerance for change that immigration brought about, just like he felt that in the early stages of marriage, adjustment was an unavoidable part of the process.

#### Both children's latency transitions

She was very curious and good at card games, starting at five when I first taught her a simple game. He, on the other hand, never cared. (P.19)

German was not particularly detailed about any other stage of his children's development, except for their current relationships, therefore it was hard to find appropriate quotes to address this phenomenon during latency stage, but he always described his daughter as the easier child, who has wider, and more similar to his, circle of interests. There was not enough evidence in German's narrative to suspect a specific gender-related conflict, as it was in Uri's case, when he expressed strong jealousy towards his son, which was absent towards his daughter. It is possible that the difference

in German's attitude in relation to his children was indeed more determined by their temperamental dissimilarities.

When we came here, he was eleven. With them growing up, it seemed the more they became fluent in English, the more they appeared American. The stopped watching Russian cartoons that I used to bring them from abroad because they already were not able to understand some subtleties. We got to the point when it became easier for my daughter to speak English; even though we had taken them to a once a week class in Russian language...I did everything so that they would not use English at home when they were little. Told them if they use English I would slap them. Never did, of course. Now they even fight with each other in Russian, and that's my accomplishment. [Laughing]. (P.20)

This was, probably, the most drastic quote in terms of the amount of influence German was willing to exercise over his children at any given point of time. He not only expressed a specific point of view that did not go along with the mainstream of their development, but was willing to go to a great length to reinforce his ideas. He also, out of all participants, commented in the most literal way on the children's growth as the process of becoming immersed into American culture, thus signifying a separation from him. This, in its turn, provides us with the information about the gap between his core identity and his perception of American culture at the time of his children's latency transitions. Other than their cultural separation, German has not been able to pinpoint any more specific evolutions of their development that would catch his attention.

#### Advanced stage of immigration

I went to Kazakhstan to take a look at what was going on there. Even before my trip, I had decided on a career change. It was decided to stay at least up until the children grow up. And make some money meanwhile. This idea is probably still in the back of my mind somewhere. Even though it is getting harder and harder with each year (to think about leaving)...because the changes I planned were supposed to happen to Kazakhstan's economy are not happening. I thought Russia would take us back. (P.9)

New situations or new motives changed my attitude towards America...not the comparison between the two countries. (P.13)

My attitude towards Kazakhstan's authority had changed over the [immigration] years...To the city, too. It became more beautiful; there are too many places that I cannot recognize. (P.13)

It appeared that the turning point and major shift in German's relationships with both countries occurred during his first several years of immigration, when he decided to stay "at least until the children grew up." There was a two-year gap after his first two visits to Kazakhstan. If during these visits German continued to actively pursue his business, he used his third visit to register and/or confirm changes in his attitude towards Kazakhstan, which occurred along with German adjusting his expectations and actions as a response to demands of the reality of living in a new country. German called himself a practical person because of what he perceives as an absence of the inclination to dwell on his emotional states or to verbalize in detail his emotional life. On the one hand, he had a seemingly external focus of attention on his native country's economy, as a way to justify his decision to stay in the US. On the other hand, he showed an understanding that the change also happened within him and allowed him to see his country of origin and the new country in a different light. This change was not only grounded in the economical dilapidation of Kazakhstan, but also in German's noticing and accepting his children's adjustment to the US, even though he considered preservation of the Russian language of essential importance.

People I knew helped me to find my first job. You have to be in the right place at the right time. (P.11)

In spite of all his ambivalence towards staying in the US, German actively prepared the ground for a career change, and then seized a job opportunity when it came about. Being "in the right place at the right time" can be understood as being open and flexible in seeing and utilizing existing possibilities.

(Describing his reaction to the terrorist attacks in New York and in Moscow) I never thought that something like that may happen in America and I was ready that it may happen over there any time. Therefore, my reactions were very different... I was happy that I did not have anybody in Moscow. I learned that at the place where it happened, the chances of people I knew being there was very low. So I just relaxed at that point. (P.18)

About two years ago, I noticed that it became easier for me to understand spoken language. ..Before I watched hockey and could not understand a word of what they were saying, I was like, "who cares what they are saying, I could see it for myself." (P.12)

One of German's prominent defensive strategies appears to be the devaluation of others, either of their qualities, e.g., under skilled factory workers at the previous stage of immigration, or of their importance in German's life. He appeared to have various levels of insight into that as a defense and its function. For example, he understood it as a defense when he had language related difficulties and wanted to feel sufficiently informed, without relying too heavily on language during TV sport coverage. At the same time, German appeared to have no insight into the nature of his feelings concerning the terrorist attack in the Moscow Theater when he needed to put so much stress on the presumption that no one from his acquaintance was in the vicinity of the attack, in order to circumscribe his feelings about that incident. Interestingly, this consideration was not taken in account during the 9/11 attack – German just acknowledged his disillusionment and feeling vulnerable and fearful for everybody's safety, which may indicate a developing distance from his country of origin, while emotionally moving closer to his new country.

#### Current relationships with children: early and late adolescent transitions

He became more rebellious, could just leave the house at once. He became harsher, more like a stranger. ..We were trying to control his late night arrivals, but it was not really realistic to exercise full control over that. ..He has never been rude, but he just shut down... He is fine with girls, dated someone for a few years. He is not the last one among his friends, either, e. g., if they come over but he did not feel like going out, he would tell them that without worrying too much what they were gonna think or if they would come again. (P.21)

Physiologically she changed, but she did not have those moments [of becoming a stranger to us]. She has these mood swings, but my wife tells me it is hormonal. Other than that, she reacts adequately to everything. (P.21)

Apparently, German is concerned with the normative trajectory of his children's growth. He keeps count of their developmental milestones, including dating and friendship components. For the reason that he is more concerned with his son's development, he mentioned the boy's "normalcy" in these areas more explicitly. According to German, his son had more troubles with his parents during puberty transition, which may be due to their tendency to exercise tighter control over him that,

in its turn, was determined by the peculiarities of his temperament. Yet German acknowledged limitations of his control, and seemed to be at peace with these limitations.

Of course, out 'little boy' loves his mommy more, and my daughter gravitates more towards me. If she needs to ask a question [she asks me], she is into finances, it seems that she wants to specialize in this area. She is very analytical. I taught her a complicated card game so that she, at times, gives me advice on that; that usually astonishes my friends. He [the son] couldn't care less. (P.19)

(How do you spend your free time?) We can go for a picnic to the park or visit friends. But they stopped going, first the son stopped, now the daughter started working, even though I tried to talk her out of that. ..She wants to be independent. I asked her, what she needed it for. (Did you contemplate not letting her do that?) No, I did not want to be an obstacle for her. Let her learn how to earn money... We encouraged our son to go find work. Last summer he worked making pretzels. My wife was trying to make a case out of how little he was making and that he needs to study to make decent money... He wanted to quit school. We told him, that's ok, but then he would have to pay all his expenses, including one-fourth for rent. (P.22)

There is enough anecdotal evidence that a child who is perceived to be more like a parent, tends to have a better relationship with this parent and tends to elicit more parental pride. It seemed to be very much true in German's family. German views his daughter's intellectual achievements and interests as similar to his own, and, according to him, he ends up spending more time with her, while his son gravitates more towards his mother. German's attitude about his children's work endeavors reflects the differences in handling his two children. He believes that his daughter is a responsible person who does not need to be taught a work ethic, and that she should concentrate on her studies, without having work as a distraction. His son is a different story in that regard, and both parents feel that a non-skilled poorly paid job should serve him well in terms of teaching him the values of studying and being generally more responsible in his life. Even though German expressed his disapproval about his daughter 's decision to start working or his son's contemplating dropping out of school, he still allowed them to make decisions and face the consequences of those, thus reinforcing the concept of independence in an age-appropriate manner.

She covers for him...well, even if I do not get to know something; it is better than they would be telling on each other. (P.18)

He is very handy, not like myself...I advise him, and, surprisingly enough, he sometimes listens. Even though it is becoming harder, but we still have some control over both of them in this regard. (P.23)

It seems that both of them had good relationships with us, because even if we have frictions, it's usually about some principal matters. I do not try to micromanage them. I just express my opinions, like with a job, for example. If I don't like their clothing, I can tell them that, but I would not consider doing something about it. I am like my dad in this regard, even though he was more of just a breadwinner. I try to get to the essence of what is going on with the children, even if I come really late at night, I try to devote some time, even if fifteen minutes, to learn about their day, and how they are. (P.25)

German appeared to have a constructive combination of still exercising some parental authority over his children, but doing so less and less in the current stage of their development. He described his control as being in a form of advising his children and expressing his opinion, and much less in a form of prohibitions, which was more relevant during their latency stage. The advisory voice is a form of control the majority of participants of this study came upon during their children's late adolescence transitions, but many of the parents had troubles accepting their limited authority in this stage. German appeared to be more at peace with it, even though he has several clearly defined areas where his opinions differ from those of his children.

#### Current stage of immigration

I do not have anybody over there any more. You cannot work over there. (P.4)

It appears that I would have to stay here much longer than I initially thought. It is also quite possible that I will have to live here till the end of my days. I mean, it is a sad thought for me. Because over there the development goes backward. (P.11)

I understood that stability was non-existent over there. I was able to relax only after coming here. (P.1)

Even now I still reject more of American stuff than I accept. It is hard work for me. (P.6)

Except for American hockey, I did not manage to connect to American culture. I do not feel too much of a desire to do so, either. (What do your children read?) My daughter just started to read some normal classics,

before that she used to read some idiotic children's bestsellers...I can rent a movie [in English]...I am not interested in Russian movies, either. There is full degradation over there as well. (P.14)

German's relationships with both countries can be defined as ambivalence in working progress. It seemed that the process of him gaining distance from his homeland that started at the earlier immigration stages, continued throughout all his immigration years. Currently he perceives his major avenue of self-expression, his work, as not possible in Kazakhstan. His family's future that appears to be much more stable and brighter in the US, was a moving force for his immigration on the first place. At the same time, German strives to preserve his critical abilities, which he perceives as a substantial part of who he is, and he fully exercises his critical ability when choosing the elements of American life and culture he is ready to accept and enjoy.

I tell people I am from Kazakhstan. ...I also say that I was born in the USSR. ...I would be more than happy to go visit Kazakhstan, to take a look at the city, to see some people that are still there. (P.13)

I enjoyed life over there more than here. It was more interesting, more food for one's brain, more obstacles to overcome. Materialistically, it is better here, more comfortable and stress-free. In addition, there are more opportunities here. (P.15)

I have a hard time understanding their system of weeklong vacations. You don't have enough time to recuperate. It was much better in the USSR; we had the whole month to relax. (P.11)

German is willing and able to acknowledge his ambivalence towards both countries. He openly expressed nostalgia for his country of origin, especially for its "before Perestroika" period of time. He wishfully thinks about visiting Kazakhstan, longing for his city and the people he once knew. He refuses to take in the US reality as a one-piece meal. Instead, he is willing to accept some elements of it while rejecting others and reflecting on the adaptation process as "hard work." This gradual and laborious development gives us a full flavor of German's letting go process as it changes him as well, instead of just "swallowing" new reality as it was in the case of Tanya and some other participants.

It became much easier for me at work here, once I started doing finances instead of pure programming. It is closer to what I was doing in my own business. (P.11)

Everything is going well at work, I feel comfortable and competent there. I have a good family. I have a circle of friends, coworkers, that gives me a comfortable feeling. I have a difficult work schedule, though, and it is getting harder to adjust to it with years passing by. (P.11)

My wife feels totally comfortable with her broken English. I am a different story; my language mistakes annoy the hell out of me. ...Unfortunately, my coworkers are mostly Russian speaking at my current job. (P.12)

It should not come as a surprise that job German began to enjoy was, or he perceived it to be, very similar to what he used to do in his own business back in Kazakhstan. It combines the stability that he lacked in Kazakhstan with his area of interest. Even though he perceived the whole American reality as not challenging enough for him, his job once provided enough of a challenge, so that now German tells us that he just began to feel “comfortable and competent.” In spite of his strong connection to Russian language, he expressed constant dissatisfaction with his English and willingness to learn, while noting some positive changes in this regard. It appeared that in many aspects of his self-concept, German was willing and ready to incorporate new roles and experiences to an extent that allowed him to preserve his core identity as someone from Kazakhstan, yet feel well adjusted and happy in his new country.

In conclusion, I want to summarize a few tendencies that were characteristic of German’s narrative. Even though this participant was able to adjust and allow change to happen, both in the process of immigration and separating from his children, his account of stages on his immigration path was much more detailed. When talking about his children, it was visibly difficult for German to sustain his focus of attention on the past; instead he kept “slipping” into the present. It appeared that children’s growth and separation was so expected and ego-syntonic for German, that he never gave it a second thought. Naturally, it was easier for him to talk about his present relationships with both children. Changes in the process of immigration appeared to be more laborious for German; therefore he had more of a conscious recollection of them.

German announced his expectations and willingness for compromise and change during his first years of marriage, which included his and his wife mutual adjustments

and German's transformation of his self-concept to include new arrivals to his family, which made him less egocentric and more patient. Similarly, he went through major changes in his self-concept during his first immigration years. German had to rethink his plans and his understanding of his professional and personal roles and accomplishments. His willingness to temporarily abandon his past professional status freed enough space for him to create a platform for a jump-start into a new professional field that eventually raised his professional status once again.

German also allowed the emotional component of parenthood and immigration to be openly present in his narrative. He acknowledged his longing for his country of origin. He did not express similar sentiment for his children's earlier years, but at the same time, he spoke with great fondness about their early childhood, thus implying that he missed that period of time, no matter how much he enjoys his current relationships with his adolescent son and daughter.

All in all, German's ability to be flexible in his self-concept and his leaving room for positive and negative components of the letting go process, allowed for a productive adjustment in his immigration process and for satisfying relationships with his growing children.

## **Dmitry's History of Parenthood and Immigration**

Dmitry is a forty-year old male originating from a small town in Ukraine. He immigrated to New York ten years ago with his immediate and extended family. He has been separated from his wife for four years and currently lives with his girlfriend in New Jersey. His thirteen-year old twin daughters spend every other weekend with them, but live with their mother in Brooklyn. Dmitry's parents, who also live in Brooklyn, continue to play an active role in their upbringing. Dmitry works as a free-lance personal trainer and currently is looking for a more full-time stable employment option.

Dmitry spoke with great fondness about his parents who brought him and his younger sister up in an atmosphere of obedience and respect, especially for their father, whose word constituted a final rule in the house. His father's professional development was in the area of engineering and hydro melioration, and he achieved a leading post in his hometown. His mother worked as a nurse, and Dmitry emphasized he lightened medical awareness that permeated their family environment. Even though Dmitry refused to acknowledge his parents' influence on his professional choice, he recalled being interested and having read every available medical source as early as in eighth grade, paying especially close attention to manuals on medical rehabilitation and massage. He, however, left home at fifteen to go to a professional technical school, and later on to college in hydro melioration. As a student, he described himself as procrastinating a lot, but then always pulling everything together the night before the finals. Dmitry's life-long area of interest was history, and he recalled with great pleasure many incidents dated back to middle school when he was able to intimidate his history teacher with his vast knowledge on the subject.

Upon finishing college, Dmitry had no interest in working in hydro melioration. He expanded his free-lance practice as a Massage therapist and chiropractor, which he started back in college. Soon he decided to become certified in this area. He worked with several people who were devotees of non-traditional medicine, and he defined each of them as genius es achieving unique results in healing people. Around the same time, Dmitry, apparently, met and married his wife, but he never went into any of the details of these events. He only mentioned that his wife was very eager to have children right away, and a year delay, when they were trying to conceive, was unnerving to her. He

did acknowledge being baffled when it was discovered during an ultrasound procedure that they were about to have twin girls.

According to Dmitry, the girls were born so small, that his wife felt uncomfortable for the first few weeks in handling them. He, on the contrary, did not hesitate a bit during those first bath times or feedings. He described himself as very involved in their care when they were infants. Dmitry also had to hold several jobs in order to generate sufficient family income. Even though the young couple rented a separate apartment, both sets of grandparents were closely involved in the twins' upbringing.

Dmitry dated his desire to emigrate way back to his early twenties, stating that he never perceived his country of origin as a place that held his hopes, neither culturally nor financially. Even though he described himself as doing amazingly well professionally, he acknowledged his inability to support his family and the necessity to rely on his father for support. Having said that, he never dreamed about emigrating without his parents or against their will, and his father never considered emigration as an option, because of his high power position in the city infrastructure. When Perestroika reached a point at which many republics, including Ukraine, declared their independence, Dmitry's father lost his position and agreed to emigrate.

Dmitry described immigration in a businesslike manner as a series of steps that needed to be taken. He spoke mostly about the logistic difficulties involved in relocating a large family with two small children. The only object he mentioned with apparent sadness and regret was his extensive library gathered over many years, all of which he gave away when preparing to leave the country. Dmitry was under the impression that it was not possible to ship his books to New York and that he would be able to find all the professional and classical literature he needed in the US. He later found out that it was not the case, and he still regrets his misconception about this matter.

Upon arrival in New York, Dmitry decided to get certified as a massage therapist, but failed the language proficiency exam necessary to enter a specific school. He started to work as an assistant and technician in an ophthalmologic business, and spent about a year there, making enough money to support his family, and also learning spoken

language the fastest way possible. He recalled the business owner with a sense of tremendous gratitude for providing him with this opportunity, and also for being exceptionally trustworthy in all monetary matters. Soon after his English improved enough so Dmitry was able to pass the exam with ease, he started a program that led him to become a certified massage therapist within a year. He described his studies as very intense because of the still significant barrier in professional language, and also because it was his first experience of learning anatomy and physiology in academia. Prior to that, his exposure in this area was limited to the more applied approach of the Ukrainian school.

Within a few months after getting his certificate, Dmitry was able to find a well-paid massage job where he worked until last year. He enjoyed working for that particular medical company, because it provided him with a sense of stability, and also with a good amount of free time. He described his own qualification as very high. Dmitry spent a lot of time in the interview comparing the level of his professional area's development in the two countries. He expressed with a great level of confidence his opinion in favor of medical rehabilitation and sports as it was developed in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Dmitry also mentioned many of his friends who immigrated to different countries and were able to use their high qualification to win numerous professional competitions.

At the same time of getting a stable job, Dmitry's family life began to deteriorate. He described his marriage as holding together for him for many years out of a sense of obligation to provide a two-parent household for his daughters. He, however, felt as if his wife and his in-laws were stepping all over his sense of self-worth and pride as the head of his family. They did not allow him to exercise his parental approach, which included, among other things, corporal punishments, neither have they consulted him on many issues pertaining to the girls' life. He felt that when his children started school, they attempted to test limits in a very real way for the first time. He described this transition when they were 6-7 years old as much more drastic and unexpected for him compared to their adolescent transition. While the daughters were testing limits, Dmitry could not exercise his parental power because his hands were tied by his wife and her parents. He described, with apparent pain, an episode when the girls were about nine

years old, and he wanted to invite many friends over for his birthday. The family did not have enough space in their living room, so Dmitry asked his daughters to make their room available for one night. This, according to Dmitry, was met with such a wave of resentment, yelling, and cursing from his daughters, with their mother's active encouragement, that he felt like a stranger to his family. His decision to leave, which was on his mind before as well, took a very definite form, and he left within a couple of weeks.

Dmitry described his ex-wife as manipulative because she, reportedly, attempted to bring him back through their children. He continued to be close to his daughters for about three years after the divorce, because he worked in the area near their home and school. Even though he moved to the suburbs, he still used to see them every day, and his parents continued to be the major part of the girls' lives. The situation changed when he lost his job about a year ago. Dmitry stopped traveling to Brooklyn every day. Instead, he takes the girls every other week to spend a weekend with him and his new girlfriend.

Dmitry spoke with remorse and guilt about his current level of involvement with his daughters. He would like to be a larger part of their lives. On the one hand, he feels his participation is limited by physical distance, on the other, – his opinions and wishes were repeatedly disregarded by his ex-wife and her parents. As an example, he discussed one of his daughter's poor academics as a function of her laziness. His ex-wife, according to him, conceptualizes this as a result of her emotional reaction to divorce, and, therefore, is trying to cure her, rather than force her to do the job.

Dmitry described his daughters as two very different individuals, both physically and personality wise. He spoke several times about one of them as more similar to him when he was a child, and the other one being a quiet, more manageable person. Dmitry emphasized his calm approach to their pubertal changes and pronounced his acceptance, although limited, toward peculiarities of, for example, their dressing styles.

Dmitry was taken by a surprise by his job loss a year ago. He blamed himself for being so unprepared for such an event and becoming too comfortable at his old job. He recalled promising to himself during his first extensive job search that he would not stop improving his skills and looking for additional opportunities, and then breaking his

promise soon after. He is currently searching for jobs, and he slightly changed his field to meet the market's demands. Even though relatively new to this professional development, Dmitry described his achievements and skills as being quite superb if compared to his American colleagues.

In general, Dmitry expressed special pride in his objectivity when comparing the two countries. According to him, his level of comfort and degree of adjustment to the US are very high. He mentioned "our" mentality as being close to American mentality along many lines. He also spoke with disdain about immigrants who were not able to find themselves at ease in the US, blaming it on their rigidity and shortsightedness. Dmitry feels that, while molding well into American culture, he still preserves his identity as a Russian Jew, even though he had troubles elaborating on that issue. He was equally critical towards the political systems of both countries.

### **Dmitry's Story: Transitions, Themes and Quotes**

*"I, as opposed to the vast majority of our people, ... "*

#### **Leitmotiv**

I perform my responsibilities on a very high level. (P.1)

Dmitry has a very consistent and not particularly subdued theme of his accomplishments as being superb if compared to those of others. This theme is not only consistent in time dimension – it is equally present in his past and present, it is also prevalent in virtually all areas of his life significant for Dmitry. The aura of superiority also covers his friends and professional associates who become exceptional in one way or another in his description.

I always have this peculiar situation in my life; there were twenty people in my class (on massage). After six months, I was the only one working (in this area). (P.14)

I used to do things (in rehabilitation medicine) that nobody did, even in the USSR. (P.6)

The volume of work I used to accomplish, they had to hire two people to do it (about his first job as an assistant to an optician). (P.14)

Nobody is even coming close to my qualification (as a personal trainer). (P. 30)

I have chosen the best kickboxing classes in Brooklyn for them (his daughters) with the trainer whom I knew from Ukraine. I used to train with him; he was one of my friends. (P.38)

Dmitry described his professional trajectory and work ethic as exceptional, both in the USSR and in the US. Even though there was an attempt on his part to be objective and to mention his shortcomings (e.g., his lack of knowledge in general anatomy that he was able to compensate for only later in his career), the general trend was to single out at least one essential feature that Dmitry felt he could control for and was exceptional at. For example, he, historically, felt that he was not able to control his daughters' upbringing, because of his wife and his in-law's interfering, but at least, he was able to find the best classes for them. It was also essential for him to mention his close connection to the trainer.

This trend was so prevalent in Dmitry's narrative; he spent so much time describing his distinctions from others, that we can only speculate how threatening it might be for him to feel as one of many. His pronounced externalization tendency will be apparent throughout this data analysis, but in this particular instance he used the external differences of being more skilled or more persistent as a tool that helped him not to blend into a faceless crowd. It is quite possible that external differences help him compensate for the lack of internal self-differentiation and anxiety connected to that.

#### Transition into parenthood

It was an interesting decision. [Smiling] My wife had that fixed idea that we needed to hurry. ..I did not mind, for me it was normal. It was not like we had to sit down and have a family meeting, no. ...For a year nothing happened, and she was very worried...And suddenly, here we go...(When did you first feel like a father?) Well, because we had these problems for a while, when one of our friends, an OB/GYN, informed (us) that (my wife) was pregnant, it was, of course, well...and when it was discovered that it was twins, everybody was, of course...well.. I can't, however, say that I had some significant changes in my mentality. (P.17)

Dmitry appears to be a loving and involved parent; parenthood, as it will be evident later, constitutes a large part of his identity and his self-concept. He himself defines the decision-making process about children as interesting, implying at least a certain level of emotional investment. At the same time, he disowns both positive and negative aspects of this process, vaguely describing his position as "feeling normal about

it.” He projected his anxiety about the waiting period - it was only his wife who was worried about the delay and their ability to conceive. He hesitated while describing the moment when the pregnancy was confirmed, and his uncharacteristic hesitation may serve as an indicator of his strong emotions, which he not only failed to verbalize but also needed to bring an impersonal pronoun “everybody” to water down the intensity of his feelings about his wife’s pregnancy. This tendency goes along with his need to negate any possible bearing his feeling like a father for the first time could have on his mentality.

### Early childhood transitions

It was funny how I was using the same hole in the fence around the hospital to take a peck at my daughters that my father used to show me my sister through when she was born (Dmitry was three at that time)... They were very small when we first brought them home. My wife was afraid to touch them. They were five and a half and four and a half pounds. I gave them a bath every day, I changed and swaddled them. As if that and my work were not enough, I also worked as a trainer then. That was kind of interesting because around their third month, they acquired a habit of sleeping in two-hour night shifts – when one was asleep; the other one was fully awake. You couldn’t really leave them because they could choke on their bottles. So I was spending my nights in a chair nearby. Around 6 o’clock in the morning, when I had to leave for my workout class, both of them fell asleep. (P. 18)

(Did you have all the night shifts?) Yea, my wife was too tired to do that... Her labor was normal but difficult, she was tired. I was giving them massage.. no... she did not. (P. 18)

The theme of intergenerational connection was very strong in Dmitry’s narrative. He compared his family to his parental family on a regular basis. The notion of his daughters being born in the same hospital where his sister was born had a grounding function for him and it provided him with a sense of security. In light of his strong identification with his parental family with its classical patriarchal structure, Dmitry’s close involvement in the everyday care for his daughters is striking. In addition, the general trend on a periphery of Ukraine was to have a classical role distribution in families when the husband was supposed to be a bread winner, and the wife was the one and only primary caregiver for children. Dmitry’s rather “maternal” approach can be

reflective of his genuine interest in the girls, but his insisting on his wife not being able to fulfill the role expectations may also serve as a contrasting background against which his work load of childcare, home chores, and work, appeared even more stoic.

Every stage (of their development) was remarkable. When A. made a full circle while on her belly at four months – it was such advancement. They were so different...M. started to walk first, and it took A. longer to learn how to get up on her own, she was afraid to do that. The first one started to crawl, the second one followed. (P.18)

An incredibly interesting period was from six months to one year, and then from one to three years – they were changing every day. I will never forget the day I woke up from a loud noise and saw one of them on a table lifting up a huge marble vase and putting it down with a thud. (P.19)

(Speaking about changes that fatherhood brought about) A sense of responsibility for my own life has changed.... Responsibility and also a feeling that you're investing yourself in somebody. I never babied my daughters, never, even when they were a year old. We talked, we spent time together. (P.39)

Compared to the rest of the participants, Dmitry has one of the most detailed accounts of early childhood transitions that his children went through. He not only noticed those transitions, but also welcomed and enjoyed them. Along with that, changes in his self-concept were significant. His stepping into parenthood was marked by changing the level of responsibility and self-investment. The detailedness of the description of his daughters as two different personalities is very consistent throughout this stage. Apparently, his good ability to self-differentiate from them, while taking care of them, co-occurred with ego-syntonic changes in his self-concept, when Dmitry was able to enjoy his new role as a father and to change with his daughters at the early stages of their development.

#### First stage of immigration: decision-making

(How the decision about immigration was made?) We have to start from the fact that my father was an executive at XX corporation and had over four hundred people in his authority who, in their turn, were responsible for communal services for the whole city. ...If it were not for him, we would not have been able to survive, even though I was making good money...He was the key person. Knowing his negative attitude towards immigration, I

did not even want to bring up that topic. As soon as he told us that we were going, we started packing. (Pp.2-3)

As in the case of decision-making about having children, Dmitry appeared to substitute the process of making a decision with a state of mind that can best be described as readiness for the event. He was ready to immigrate but did not bring up this question because he was able to predict his father's negative answer based on their experience together. As soon as his father had signaled his lack of objection, Dmitry changed his potential readiness to immigrate into an active execution of this step. A sense of Dmitry's immediate family as an individual unit was remarkably absent. It also appeared that Dmitry did not particularly object to his father supporting him and his immediate family, which all might be indications that he perceived his father as the head of a household, which included both, his immediate and extended family.

(What was important to take with you?) We packed on the basis of wrong information, and, as a result, we left everything important, like my medical library. I thought, why take all of it, if I would be able to find it here. Apparently, I was wrong. ...It was ridiculous; we dragged our clothing with us instead of bringing a good iron pot for pilaf. (P.12)

While answering this particular question, all the participants of this research could be divided into two categories. There were participants who answered it in a concrete way, literally listing the household items and Dmitry was one of them. Another group of participants responded on a different level to the question of what was important to take to another country. They also sometimes mentioned concrete items (e.g., Anna recalled how important it was for her to take photo albums to the US) but they always spoke about the meaning those things had for them in the process of separation. They also spoke about their feelings of loss that had special significance around those items and what they represented. There was an important difference in these two groups of participants in terms of utilizing externalization as a main defense, which was true for the first group. The second group of participants mainly relied on a different set of defenses, and externalization did not play a prominent role among them.

(What was your attitude about your father's decision to immigrate?) Very calm. Of course, I was scared. I, as opposed to the vast majority of our people, did not think that America was a dreamland. The information that we had was incoherent and incorrect...(Did you visit the US before immigration?) No, I did not have time. And why would I, anyway? (P.3)

(How did you feel when you were leaving?) I felt relief. I was scared to death to face the procedure of two train rides and a long flight with two little kids and an almost blind grandmother. But when we boarded the flight, everything calmed down for me. I did not fear the arrival. Well, of course, I was fearful of the unknown, of an unfamiliar situation. Hard to describe, some kind of deeply rooted anxiety. (P.11)

It was somewhat easier for Dmitry to attribute, as intrinsic to the process of uprooting and relocation, his confusion from incorrect information, instead of acknowledging and containing it as a part of his internal struggles. One can also be privy to observing his oscillations between acknowledging and denying his anxiety. As opposed to another participant, Lena, who also used externalization extensively, but whose affect around loss was completely split off, Dmitry possessed an ability to feel and remember both positive and negative affect related to immigration. This ability allows for flexibility to not only assuage the stress of relocation, but also to “decided that I would figure out there, in the US, what to do.” (P.8)

(Describe yourself at that time.) All local alcoholics were telling me, “Wow, your friends are so smart, all Ph. D’s.” My crowd was different...their circle of interests was very wide. The woman I worked with was phenomenal, she never stopped perfecting her skills, never stopped her self-development. I often had up to ten people in my kitchen discussing the latest developments of Tai Chi and practicing. Incredible people. But I have to say, that I reached a point when I did not have enough professional space to grow in X. It became too trivial... (P.9)

One tendency quite prominent in this quote, consistently with the main theme, was for Dmitry to make sure that he was different from “local alcoholics” and to do it through having incredible friends and colleagues with a wide circle of interests. That theme of his superiority served as a background for his feelings of apparent happiness and contentment both, professionally, socially, and personally at that time. He described an excitement and intensity in all areas of his life, which was not duplicated in years to come. It seems that lack of mentorship and stagnation of professional developments, was introjected into that period around the time of emigration. A similar tendency existed in several other participants’ narratives when around the time of emigration, they started to

experience an important but not essential part of their reality in a negative light, easing their way into emigration.

#### First steps in the US

I was like in fog...We were so rattled...I won't forget the way I was standing in the airport bathroom for five minutes, not knowing how to flush the toilet. (P.13)

I could not speak but I was not afraid to speak. (P.5)

We were so busy; there was not time to reflect. (P.23)

When we first came here, it became a matter of principal for me to read only in English. (P.25)

The fog –like state of confusion and the vivid flashbacks of small concrete details were the universal experiences of arrival across all the participants. The dissociative quality of first experiences of immigration as well as the somewhat manic quality of the first months, and, in some cases, up to two years after arrival, are well described in the immigration literature and seem to serve as a cushion, absorbing the first shock upon arrival.

It was an adaptation stage for us...For about a month we couldn't find an apartment so all eight of us lived together. We almost killed each other [Laughs]...We were apartment hunting. I was also looking around, talking to people. (Pp. 13-14)

Nayana (an organization that provides help for new immigrants) then took us and streamed into a wave of actions. For about three months – language classes, then – professional classes...My language got better. ...And the most important stage was when I got a job through my father's acquaintance. It was a changing moment...I worked like crazy, but I made good money. The owner was exceptionally fair in all money matters. ..It was the stage that allowed me to adjust to this country completely. This guy helped me the most...And then I went to school. (P.14)

In these quotes and in many others, Dmitry provided us with an exceptionally full and detailed account of his first steps in the new country. In his narrative, he captured positively and negatively emotionally loaded moments of that stage. His tendency to use higher order defenses during this stage, e.g., humor and sublimation, allowed for flexible

adaptation, which included utilizing all available resources and adjusting his actions as a response to environmental feedback. Dmitry probably overestimated the degree of progress in adjustment he was able to make during those first few months, but nevertheless, his development in this direction was remarkable.

### Latency transitions

I was trying to hold on to our marriage because of the children. But there was a moment when the children started to go off at me in such a way that I eventually understood I was fooling myself. (P.1)

When they were about nine, we had that key moment when on my birthday we were supposed to have many people over that we couldn't fit into our small living room. So I decided to convert their bedroom for that purpose for one night. They started to yell at me that it was their room and I should use my room instead. My ex stood by them and encouraged them to go ahead and tell me off. All three were yelling at me. I felt like everything was upside down...I felt like a butler for all three of them. ..I told her that I would be gone in two weeks and I was (gone). (P. 22)

Not particularly detailed about his feelings in general, in this case Dmitry acknowledged his extreme emotional pain and bewilderment about his family life and his role as a parent at that particular time. Apparently, at this stage of their development, when the girls became more verbal and articulate about their feelings and wishes, his conflicts with his wife about the twins' upbringing became reflected in his daughters' attitude towards him. It clashed tremendously with his classical patriarchic view that children were supposed to respect and obey their parents and never question their actions. His marital discord stressed out Dmitry's coping mechanisms and forced him into a more primitive and rigid defensive mode.

I was trying to raise my children the way I was raised, but I couldn't really do it because of my ex...My in-laws got in the middle without really participating or helping out...I think many problems that we are dealing with now, started when the girls were 6-7 and we did not teach them to listen and obey, maybe even under the threat of physical punishment. Every time I would lift up my hand, my in-laws hung over me, telling me that I was wrong. ...If before the kids just did not know what they were doing, at that time they started to test the limits. They could tell me they didn't hear what I said, or continue to do what they were doing regardless of my words. (P.20)

When the school came into the picture, they became separate, even physically. They started to form in a strange way for us. It was such a significant jump. (More serious) than now. Now (their puberty) I perceive as normal, you can survive this. (P.39)

It was a function of that idiotic American school upbringing that for my every statement, they came up with a question “Why? They told us at school such and such.” In the Soviets they would have not done the same thing at that age... I don’t want my every action to be questioned. There are things you can’t explain. (P.21)

The school gives them a sense that everything is allowed. They are trying to forge individuality without building a sense of responsibility. (P.35)

Similarly to fluctuating between acknowledgement and denial of his anxiety, during the stressful time of immigration, Dmitry oscillated between two tendencies in describing his daughters’ latency transitions. Most of the time he felt that they were getting out of his control and he blamed the school and his wife’s family for that. His use of externalization was quite extensive at that time. It was not particularly surprising that Dmitry had such difficulties with his daughters’ latency transition. Their earlier transitions were mostly about gaining mastery over their verbal and non-verbal abilities, including physical components, which was very much welcomed by Dmitry. They were individuating within the family system, and he conceptualized their misbehaviors at those early stages as developmental stumbling, as if they did not know better. During their latency, the girls, as expected, were spilling out of the family into the larger world, and their choices at times gravitated toward the school. Only occasionally, Dmitry verbalized a vague understanding of that, as a developmental stage intrinsic to his children. Most of the time, he attributed these changes to uninvited school and societal influences that were snatching the girls away from the family and from a responsible way of living. So if the girls were turning away from home, it was the school to blame. If the girls were distancing themselves from him and becoming close to their mother, which is once again developmentally expected, it was their mother’s fault.

I had that gut feeling that if I stay there, I was going to die before my time. (P. 23)

I did not have the normal authority (over my daughters). (P.35)

I do not participate (in the daughters’ life). Nobody is asking me...Even when we lived together we had conflicts about decision-making regarding their issues. ..for example, they were brain washed by my in-laws and my

ex about martial arts being not for girls. And even if they enjoyed it at the beginning, they stopped going soon because of that. (P.38)

(Could you describe yourself during the time of divorce?) I was the same I am now...I had the same circle of friends that we shared with my ex and that she got into through me. (P.34)

It appears that Dmitry described two major lines of development at that time. On the one hand, his daughters were developing rapidly in a direction that he perceived as threatening to his authority. On the other hand, he felt more and more trapped by what was happening in his family. His relationships with his wife and daughters were poor, his circle of friends and social relations were satisfying but “the same” for many years, and his professional development, as we will see in a few quotes, was relatively on hold. The dissonance between these two trends appeared to be very significant, and his abrupt separation from his family served as an immediate means to relieve that extreme inner tension.

#### Advanced stages of immigration

I worked at a good place for five years, making good money. Everything was quiet for those five years. (P.8)

I had an ideal schedule. (P.16)

When I found this job, I stopped moving, stopped striving to add something else, in terms of money or qualifications...It is difficult to recall that period because of the awful atmosphere in my family; the stress level was extreme. (P.16)

Similarly to describing his daughters’ latency transitions, the period of time between three to eight-nine years of immigration was the least detailed in Dmitry’s description. We can speculate about the combination that determined that lack of details. When a person settles down, in any sense, the changes themselves might become more spaced and/or the perception of them may become less sharp. Also the changed quality of Dmitry’s description can be reflective of some stagnation in his development during those years, the resolution of which came through divorce and a change in the professional field. In addition, because that period of time appears to be quite traumatic for this participant, some defensive suppression and mild dissociation might have been taken place as well.

When you find an 18-century weapon arsenal with the stamp of Ivan the Terrible in the dump near an abandoned fort, you begin to understand that nothing is ever going to change in that country (the FSU). Because when you come to some historical site here, and the 16-century canon is not just in a good condition, it is in a *working* condition, that is something!... We traveled here a lot to Canada, New England, Plymouth, Baltimore, Philadelphia...I am trying to attend to historic artifacts...(P.25)

...When I started to work, I discovered that *local trainers' qualification is not just low; it is low beyond all expectations. ...You risk your life and your health if you start working with a local personal trainer.* (P.7)

Dmitry's internal conflict in his relationship to the country of origin and to the new country, surfaced in the form of intellectualized dialog, where he praised himself for his objectivity and lack of bias towards either country. His frequent comparisons of the cultural, historical, or medical fields of the two countries served as an outlet for discharging his conflicted feelings. Dmitry's attempts to come to grips with the new country take place through intellectual channels of visiting historical sites, learning its history, and praising Americans for preserving historical artifacts so well. At the same time, he preferred to hold on to his professional achievements that were formed in the FSU as far superior compared to American development in the same area.

#### Current relationships with the children

When we settled that I was not coming back (to live with them), our relationships (with the children) improved. (P.1)

The circumstances are such that I do not pay enough attention to them right now. My involvement is manifested in the attempts to solve problems they have. (P.18)

I am not present with them on a continuous basis, and it shows. (P.37)

A. has problems at school because of her *incredible* laziness. ...She is also impulsive; like I was...My ex blames all their problems on the divorce. ..But they don't have good communication among three of them, either. A. now plays my role in the family. They (the mother and A.) have wild arguments about everything; they yell more than they talk. (What is your reaction to A.'s problems at school?) I have a strong reaction. But I don't have any bearing. I still think that instead of never-ending doctors' appointments, she needs to be spanked. And not just spanked, spanked with a clear understanding what she is getting her beatings for. (P.40)

Dmitry is one of the two participants of this study who had divorce incorporated in their experience of child rearing. In direct and indirect ways, he manifested significant guilt about not being present with his children on an everyday basis. However, his guilt does not have the same paralyzing quality, as in Anna's narrative where her guilt was the major channel through which she related to her son. Dmitry's guilt was pushed to the background, possibly even more so as a defensive rebellion against his ex-wife's efforts to hold him directly responsible for his daughters' problems along the way. He is in touch with the positive changes in the relationships that occurred after the divorce. With that said, the topic of divorce and his wife's and his differences in child-rearing styles, were all anxiety provoking themes for him. As a reaction, Dmitry had a tendency to become more rigid and less nuanced around every controversial issue. His strong identification with one of the daughters, intensified the same scenario. Occasionally, when he was lacking emotional distance from her, he perceived the girl as an extension of his childhood persona, and he was harshly disciplined by his parents, therefore, she could benefit from the same treatment.

If M. doesn't like red colors, we do not dress her in these colors. She has her individuality, and that's OK. But a month ago I had a conflict with A. because she wanted to go for a walk in her pajama pants! (P.21)

I treat the kids with respect, although I sometimes do not understand them. I am trying to communicate and assess the reality. If A. wants to go for a walk in her pajama pants, I'm gonna smack her on the behind and make her change. But if she wants to put on an unspeakably colored T-shirt, that's ok by me. (P.21)

It is so interesting the way they are changing... It was a very apparent change in their preferences. If before they wanted to go to some expensive toyshop for their birthdays, now they either want money, or to take them to the mall shopping. Their taste in styles, their wishes – everything has changed...Physically they developed as well. Children grow, they must (smiling). (P.35)

A. is a very atypical child. ...If she has had it, she can start screaming obscenities on all corners. She is so volatile. M. is slow to warm up, but if she has chosen one direction, (that's it). ...If A. is in a bad mood, she can call me and scream on the phone. Then M. takes over the phone and tells me not to pay any mind to A. because she had a bad day... We call each other frequently. (P.37)

I use corporal punishment as an extreme measure, when everything else has been tried. ...Like when I spoke to them three times already, and warned them, and everything. (P.41)

(What is your attitude toward the prospect of their relationships with boys?)  
Whatever and whenever it happens, I am fine with that. Of course, I want them to do that when they will be able to be responsible for their actions. ..I want them to hit the stonewall face first as rarely as possible. I don't have a recipe for them. (P.42)

As in many other instances, Dmitry had a dichotomous reaction to this stage of his daughters' development. He welcomed physical growth and development, and changes in their circle of interests. Dmitry was able to acknowledge and contain some level of ambiguity, not knowing and not understanding their motives and behaviors. He noticed and enjoyed the differences in their personalities and how they manifested in their behaviors and attitude towards him. Even when A.'s mood swings took the more extreme form of openly screaming at him and cursing him, he, apparently, possessed an ability to step aside and to not overreact, at least some of the times. It appears, that Dmitry experienced the most difficulties in the area of the girls' independent decision-making, which, for him, implies a challenge to his authority. Even though the difference between taking a walk in pajama pants or in a canary colored T-shirt may seem to be minor for his daughter, for Dmitry it was significant enough to elicit a very strong reaction from him. In that case, he based his decision to punish the child based solely on his level of comfort, disregarding the meaning it might have for her. The threat to his authority, which already was challenged by his ex-wife's and, consequently, his daughters' attitudes, appeared to be the major trigger for his rigid highly reactive states. When he was able to gain a necessary distance from the issue of authority, Dmitry was generally quite accepting of the perspective of the girls' individuating and separating from him and from their mother.

#### Current immigration stage

I blame myself, my five years of relaxing in my previous job, for ending up in this situation. I do not blame the country or my bosses. (P.32)

I have this strange moment in my life. ..I was looking for a job last year, and couldn't find anything. So I slightly changed my field, and I work as a personal trainer right now. (P1)

I am in limbo right now. I laugh because in terms of my attitude and my spending, I am in a situation similar to the one when I just started to look for job (in my field in this country)...I am interested in a job where I take a person and in three months he sheds two sizes, becomes stronger, and better coordinated...I am able to train a person with any kind of trauma, because I know it well and can work with it. (P.15)

I just got my certificate. I should say that I already achieved some very interesting results with my clients...(gives an example of several clients who lost weight and became fit) I did in six weeks what local trainers can't achieve in a year. ... (P. 10)

Dmitry acknowledged being in a very uncertain frame of mind in terms of his professional development at the present moment. He compared this situation to the situation he had been in during his first few years of immigration, which may be perceived as a regress, and certainly as a change compared to his previous, settled down, state. As with almost every ambiguous and anxiety provoking situation, he relies on externalization to avoid emotional discomfort. In particular, he faced the necessity to prove himself, yet again, in a relatively new field for him. In order to contain the anxiety around this issue, he resorts to measuring up his success literally in pounds and inches and comparing himself to others, American trainers, thus creating external scaffolding, which is supposed to maintain his sense of security and self-worth. With that said, it was remarkable how Dmitry, relatively late, both in his immigration path and in his adult development, became willing to make and accept changes in his life.

Quite frankly, I have chosen a way of less resistance in terms of my professional choice here, and maybe I made a mistake. Naturally, it was easier for me to go into the sphere that I knew and felt comfortable with. But I could be better off now if I were to choose something around computers, although I would have to study extensively to do that. (P.30)

Dmitry's ability to look critically into his past and examine his choices gives us a sense that his concept of himself as a professional of a specific category is not rigid. That particular aspect of his self-concept appears to be stable of surface, but in reality it is an object of subtle changes over time. Dmitry's ability to utilize available resources (e.g., his eagerness and appreciation of new information while studying for his US certificate) and his sensitivity to the demands of the market, while staying true to his professional area of expertise, could serve as signs of a flexible self-concept.

I have this strong belief that an alcoholic phys-ed teacher in the middle of nowhere in Ukraine knows more than any celebrity trainer in the US. I've

discovered that the system of medical massage in the US is compatible to that of Russia in 1908. (P.11)

The tendency for intellectual comparison as a major way of dealing with conflicted feelings about immigration, played the most important role in the previous stage of Dmitry's immigration path. Currently, he appears to utilize it substantially less, apparently feeling more at ease with his place in the immigration process.

I do not feel an urge to visit (Ukraine), because I always tell everybody that you don't miss the land, but you miss the people. (P.11)

It doesn't matter for me whether to read in Russian or English. You can come to my house and find books in both languages. I highly respect American "fantasy" literature. I have a list of authors whose books I buy without even looking inside the cover. (P.25)

There are two categories of immigrants, one are people who visit (their country of origin), God knows why; and the second category do not visit at all...I don't want to visit those dirty and dilapidated streets. My friends are all over the world, and I visit them in different countries. (P.29)

I have not changed culturally. All the foundation was laid out before (in Ukraine). I just got wider access to information here. And I appreciated that. (P.32)

Dmitry described himself quite consistently as well adjusted in pretty much every modality of American life. Due to the above-described tendency to sort out his internal conflicts through external means, the whole adjustment process appeared to be curtailed both in terms of the length of time it took, and the level of details he went into. Even though he seemed to reject his country of origin as an object he might wish for, Dmitry acknowledged his roots as being important and alive for him.

I do not care what's happening (in the FSU). Abstractly I do pity people over there, but in reality I do not feel compassion for them. I am an aggressive person in this regard, because I think that the life in that country was never good and never will be fine. I have a couple of people who consider the FSU the ideal country, or feel that even if it was not ideal, it is our Motherland and you can not be critical towards your Motherland. See, history has always been my hobby. I always ask them to identify a historical period when life in Russia was good. I am trying to find this period and I can't. Therefore, I do not feel nostalgic. (P.24)

I think that our and their (the FSU) governments are prostitutes of the same level.... Neither of them have enough guts to acknowledge that we are in a third world war already...and for their battle in Chechnya, we better help

them (the FSU government) out...Interestingly enough, in the conversation about their life in general, I do not associate myself with these people, but in the situation of terror acts I totally see us on the same side of the barricades against a common enemy. (P.26)

(It seems like you had a similar reaction on 9/11 and on events in the Moscow Theater...) Not similar, but identical. I was furious with both governments for fucking it up and not taking enough precautions. (P.27)

From the first quote we can get a glimpse into the extent Dmitry's externalization was useful for him in the process of letting go of his country of origin. Any kind of sorrow or regrets he might have as a result of leaving his country behind were not just distanced by an intellectual exercise of analyzing historical periods, but also further pushed away by his attempts to convince others of the fruitlessness of their nostalgic feelings. It should not come as a surprise that merging of the two countries occurred for Dmitry in the yet again well-distanced realm of big politics. In a way, this outlet served as an ideal container, because, in spite or, possibly, due to its distance from his everyday life, talking and thinking about politics allowed Dmitry to have feelings about both countries, to be intermittently upset, angry, proud, or discontent with both objects. Only from a distance, he felt safe enough to express the degree to which both countries and their people became important and indivisible for him.

Dmitry strongly emphasized that he has not changed over the years, even though, based on his narrative, we can suspect otherwise. Absence of change was an important notion for him, quite possibly because he experienced difficulties in self-differentiation. Once Dmitry has achieved some level of it through external means, he has to hold on to his attainment, thus noting and reflecting on changes might feel anxiety provoking for this participant.

There were strong similarities in Dmitry's style of relating and letting go of objects, e.g., his country of origin, or his daughters, in the process of separation-individuation. In his decision making process about immigration and about parenthood, he demonstrated a certain lack of agency when he disowned major positive and negative feelings about the process, as well as demonstrating readiness for change instead of being

an active cause for it. His strong identification with his father also had its bearings in both instances.

Dmitry's accounts of early stages of parenthood and immigration were the most detailed and vivid in terms of reflecting the effectiveness and extent of his adjustment to the process, and his capability for flexible, adaptive changes in his self-concept. He also utilized higher order defenses, e.g., humor and sublimation, instead of projection, denial and extensive externalization, that were so characteristic of his advanced stages of immigration and his reaction to his daughters' latency transitions. Apparently, a high level of stress related to a poor marital relationship, and also the core issues intrinsic to the latency transition, overwhelmed Dmitry's emotional abilities to adjust and adapt but still sustain his core beliefs. Therefore, he had to separate himself rapidly, in order to relieve inner tension. During that stage, he utilized the above-mentioned, more primitive, defenses, and he became substantially more rigid towards his daughters' developmental transitions. It also brought about some stagnation in other areas of his development and became reflected in a more rigid self-concept at that period of time. When the stress was alleviated to a degree, Dmitry yet again was able to regain a certain level of flexibility, which became reflected in more acceptance towards his now teenage daughters, with the exception of core issues of his authority where he still has a tendency to deny and overreact to their developmental leaps. At his current immigration stage, Dmitry also demonstrated a flexible self-concept that allowed him to incorporate both countries into his worldview, even though the major means for doing that was still the distanced and highly intellectualized realm of politics and history.

When I look back, I don't feel nostalgic. ...My first association to "immigration" is people who immigrated before the revolution... We do not fall into the same category. ..I feel like I belong. (P.23)

## Chapter IV: Summary of Data and Results

All participants of this study turned out to be eager and outspoken for the most part; therefore, their narratives provided us with incredibly rich data that can be analyzed from many different angles. For the reason that the purpose of this study was to look into the process of letting go across two major life transitions, all participants were divided into three groups, depending on the level of similarity of the letting go process during these life transitions. The relationships between relinquishing objects in the letting go process and changes in self-concept of the participants were analyzed in detail in order to understand possible leading vehicles of this process.

Brief demographic information of informants that had participated in this study is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Participants' current demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Relationship Status	Year of immigration	Occupation
<u>1<sup>st</sup> group</u>					
Tanya	43	F	Married, 1 child	1998	Case manager; grad student in social work
Gala	49	F	Divorced twice; son and daughter by the first marriage	1994	Computer programmer
Samuel	51	M	Married; son	1997	Computer programmer, currently unemployed
Mikhail	50	M	Second marriage; daughter by the first marriage and three sons by the second marriage	1993	Pianist
German	47	M	Married; son and daughter	1997	Financing, computer programmer
<u>2<sup>nd</sup> group</u>					
Inga	37	F	Married; son and	1997	Social worker

Anna	51	F	Married, son daughter	1997	Case manager
Dmitry	40	M	Divorced, involved in a relationship, twin daughters	1994	Free-lance personal trainer
3 <sup>rd</sup> group Lena	42	F	Married; two sons	1990	Hair dresser
Uri	44	M	Married; son and daughter	1991	Hardware design engineer

The first group consisted of five participants (Tanya, Gala, Samuel, Mikhail, and German) that showed strong similarity in the way they negotiated both transitions, regardless of whether they appeared to relinquish the object or to preserve it in a seemingly unchanged form. The following five participants belong to the first group: Tanya, Samuel, Gala, German, and Mikhail. For each of these individuals, I will briefly recount the major tendencies of their style of letting go, as well as my take on changes, or lack of those, in their self-concept. The second group consisted of three participants (Anna, Inga, and Dmitry), all of which presented with similarities in their letting go style across two transitions, but they also exhibited significant alteration in their letting go of the objects, depending on the level of conflicted relationships with the objects. In the third group (Lena and Uri), both participants demonstrated strong discrepancies in their letting go style that were determined by the particularities of their object relations and the way those particularities found their reflection in the participants' relationships with the objects of attachment.

Now I will briefly present the participants of the first group. Tanya's narrative had a very detailed character in terms of her ability to reflect on the actual facts, as well as her

internal states, when applicable. Her major tendency in handling important life transitions was to exercise control through taking care of people that were, in one way or another, dependent on her. Keeping in mind this tendency, it should not come as a surprise that Tanya was reluctant to relinquish her control over her daughter, when it was called for at developmentally appropriate moments for the girl. Tanya interpreted those early moments as nuisances and made a special point out of not allowing her daughter to have her way. The tendency for control, through caretaking, was prominent in her job placements in the new country, when she described her feeling of incredible pride at being able to provide concrete social services for people who were born here, but who came to her for help when in need. She described how her level of professional satisfaction grew rapidly when she found a job as a social service coordinator, compared to her previous job placement connected to recreation and teaching.

In her account of her immigration and parenthood, Tanya never denied an external change when she confronted one; only internal changes eluded her. She recalled becoming a mother immediately, when she first saw her newborn in a hospital, even though she claimed never feeling any change in herself during the pregnancy period. It was as if she became a mother instantly, identifying with this role, without analyzing whether and how it fit her personality, which is often the case at the early stage of identity formation. Tanya's description of the family she befriended during her first months of immigration essentially lacked any details or depth of analysis, which was generally characteristic of her narrative. Similarly to her transition into parenthood, during Tanya's immigration transition, she, apparently, experienced some shifts in her identity that were reminiscent of identification, as in an earlier developmental stage of

identity formation. Those shifts in levels of identity organization, however, did not find their reflection in her self-concept changes: Tanya did not perceive herself as changed; neither did we find any evidence of shifting in her beliefs, set of roles, or expectations.

A combination of Tanya's tendency to control her environment through caretaking and her tendency to orient herself by external cues determined her saying that, with her parents' and her brother's immigration to New York a year after she herself immigrated, her own immigration was completed, she had finally arrived. She recalled acquiring full peace of mind at that moment. Apparently, her feeling at peace and at home was determined not so much by her adjusting internally to a different environment, or, at least, there were no evidence indicating internal change in this area, but by having a full circle of people she could take care of and feel needed by them. She also spoke about being thankful to America, a theme she started and concluded her narrative with.

Not only was Tanya able to acknowledge external changes when she encountered those, but she also tended to experience some of the internal changes as external events and react appropriately to her perception. For example, according to Tanya, her daughter, with the exception of physical maturation, did not change at all during her latency and adolescent period. Those transitions would have gone by unnoticed, if it were not for a few social difficulties the girl had at school. She complained to her mother about being ostracized by her peers and feeling that she did not fit in. Tanya reported that those difficulties brought the two of them even closer, because she, for many years up to now, became her daughter's only confidante. Tanya did not perceive this situation as problematic, and the difficulties with decision-making her daughter has now as a young adult, the mother interpreted as the girl's character trait, a continuation of the same trend

of “wenty-don’t wenty” she had as a toddler. Tanya described herself as unchanged in relationship to her daughter, experiencing the same intensity of attachment and need for control. As a result, a perspective of becoming a mother-in-law is not only less than thrilling for her, but she also expresses anger towards her prospective son-in-law, even though her daughter does not date anyone yet. It can be said that Tanya is engaged in a preventive mourning process, which includes an anger and resentment stage.

Interestingly enough, Tanya experienced a similar reaction towards her country of origin when her decision to emigrate was finalized; Tanya started to pay more attention to governmental establishments and felt angry and fed up with them, which marked the beginning of the separation process from her country of origin. However, that beginning stage became also, in a way, the end stage of the mourning process because the rest of it was extremely curtailed and never acknowledged. Tanya never spoke about missing anything in her country of origin. From her description of her first year of immigration, we can infer some mild and transient depressive states, which she experienced when she was in-between jobs in an unstructured environment. Tanya, however, never connected those to her missing some element or her roles in her country of origin; neither had she acknowledged any difficulties in her adjustment process to the new country. She felt extremely comfortable in her Russian-speaking community that preserved and conserved all the major cultural and ethnic elements useful for her. As I said earlier, Tanya reflected on her personality as the same in all its major components, which was congruent with her factual accounts of stability in her perception of self and others, her sets of roles and expectations. The only difference she was able to notice over the last twenty years was her reaction to some of her formerly close friends. They were interested in talking about

their common former colleagues-teachers, and Tanya felt so many events had happened in her life in the past fifteen-twenty years, that she became distanced from her friends with their old stories. That distance was determined by living in a different country and having had many events in her life not shared with them, rather than by being changed internally. For example, Tanya related a story of how her former boss came to visit her in New York and how she was surprised at her reaction to this woman who used to elicit respect, bordering on fear, from Tanya. According to her, now she experiences the same set of feelings towards her current boss. The above-described trend was very characterological for Tanya: she reports on being generally unchanged; and in the area where she did report changes, they were determined by differences in scenery, or environment, and not by internal shifts in her self-concept. Tanya, out of the ten participants, had probably the most similarity between her holding on to her adult daughter, in terms of exercising full control, and the way she handled her experience of immigration, denying the sheer existence of an object she could have missed had it existed independently of her. By not acknowledging her daughter as an independent individual and stating she had everything she needs culturally and personally in the new country, Tanya escapes the necessity to let go of an object, the need to be engaged in a painful mourning process.

Samuel, out of the ten participants, had the most difficulties in establishing a trusting working relationship with the interviewer, even though he perceived himself as being unusually open and wordy in the interview process, which, he stated, was uncharacteristic of him. He avoided certain topics altogether, e.g., the theme of decision-

making concerning having children or the theme of his extended family, the topics that were painful for him for a host of reasons. As opposed to Tanya's narrative, where the similarities of her relating to her country and her daughter were concrete and obvious, in Samuel's story these similarities became apparent only on a more abstract level of process analysis.

Samuel's narrative can serve as an example of how the degree of a person's well-developed ability to be engaged in a letting go process of his old country should not always be taken as an indicator of his subjectively high level of comfort in a new country. The main theme of his narrative was of him lagging behind and not being able to catch up with his more successful peers, both in his country of origin and his country of immigration. At one point in his career in Russia, he almost became very rich, missing an opportunity to agree to become a business partner instead of a technical executive in a successful enterprise. Upon arrival to New York, Samuel had to battle serious sickness, and he also spent a significant amount of time attempting to master the language in a school setting, all of which had postponed his professional adjustment. As a result, according to him, he missed an opportunity to become more financially secure and professionally satisfied. It is possible that the theme of lagging behind served a defensive function for Samuel, protecting him from being seriously challenged or from a necessity to question his abilities and aptitude. In some cases, it also allowed him to blame some objective factors for his perceived failures.

In general, Samuel's frequent tendency was to relate to important objects in his life through the medium of a third party, which was especially prominent in his relationship with his son, but also quite pronounced in his perceiving the immigration process

almost exclusively through professional adaptation. On a stage of decision-making concerning immigration, Samuel described himself as strong and empowered, and ready to face the challenges of a new journey. According to Samuel, his father-in-law was very skeptical about the whole immigration ordeal, which annoyed Samuel extremely. It was, apparently, too threatening for Samuel to face his fears about immigration directly, therefore, it became easier for him to project them onto his father-in-law and then negate their validity.

With that said, Samuel also possessed an ability to relate to an important object directly, without the help of any third party, which provided him with an opportunity to be transformed by different experiences. For example, during his last few months in Russia, Samuel had to leave his job, and he was no longer interested in continuing with his small business. During that period of time, he allowed himself to become immersed in the experience of leaving his country of origin, and of saying good-bye to his friends and his coworkers who also were his close friends. His account of this process was heartbreaking in its intensity. Samuel recalled his pain that lingered at some moments on the verge of dissociation, so overwhelmingly profound was it for him.

According to Samuel's current opinion, his conception of the US had a somewhat idealized quality during his last months before immigration. In general, it can be said that his immigration journey consisted of a series of transformations in his relationships with both countries. His first trip back to Russia Samuel defined as a purely refueling experience. He "went home" to get physically and emotionally better after the first few months of battling his sickness and the language barrier. However, over the course of a few years, during his frequent visits he started to notice his changed reaction to the

realities of life in Russia, e.g., his fright when approached by militia, his decreased level of comfort, even in familiar spots, or his changed perception of certain topics. At the same time, without a direct comparison, Samuel mentioned many areas where he became an interested and active participant in the reality of his new country; his interest in its politics and economy, and his cultural involvement grew gradually over the course of years, even though Samuel continues not to feel fully immersed in the society, that is, until he will be able to find his professional niche. There was also an important realm of human connections for him where he feels that he is not able to accept the US as “his” country. He reported on the inability to form new meaningful relationships, to create a circle of friends and business connections, something Samuel had and seemingly still has in Russia. His ability to acknowledge and be fully aware of his needs does not substitute for an ability to venture out and form new connections, therefore, Samuel’s level of comfort and subjective degree of adjustment constitute a constant source of anxiety for this participant.

To compare Samuel’s immigration journey to his parenthood path, we would have to briefly go over the major tendencies that were prominent in his narrative concerning his son. The degree to which Samuel failed to express direct emotional involvement with his son during the boy’s early years was striking. When asked about his responsibilities and feelings as a father of a young child, Samuel always spoke about his work and his career achievements. His inability to relate to his son directly was remarkable and signified his general difficulties when dealing with primal material; as soon as the medium of language came into the picture, Samuel became much more comfortable and readily emotionally available for his son. He admired the boy’s

precociousness, his strong will and good nature, but he still continued to perceive his paternal responsibilities and success through his professional advancement. Samuel preferred to exercise his influence on his son through finding beneficial environments for him, e.g., elite Jewish cultural camps, etc.

Only later, during the boy's preteen years, did Samuel attempt to get closer to his son, to spend more time with him. That change may be related to a developmental jump in the boy's cognitive abilities (e.g., newly acquired abstract reasoning), which allowed Samuel to relate to his son through the intellectual realm, the most comfortable and non-threatening area of human connection for him. However, it was also the time when Samuel learned with disappointment that his son was not particularly eager to open up to his father, possibly as a result of their previous lack of contact. Another interesting discovery happened to Samuel when his child was already an adolescent and he sent the boy to study abroad for a year. In the meantime, Samuel and his wife decided to immigrate to the US; they prepared all the documents and were ready to take their son and leave. The boy, however, made up his mind to stay in that country and he expressed his opinion very strongly to Samuel. Samuel was incredibly surprised and amused at his son's independent decision-making. He, according to his account of that event, took the pains of explaining and persuading his son, for quite a long time, before the boy eventually agreed to come to the US. This incident was remarkable in terms of Samuel's astonishment at his son's strong opinions and his efforts to take those opinions seriously, instead of just disregarding them as whims.

Samuel's account of the next significant stage in their father-son relationship was the most ambivalent in terms of his feelings around it. Upon arrival to the US and staying

at home because of his sickness and inability to find employment, Samuel ended up spending a lot of time with his son. Emotionally, he was much more vulnerable and, possibly due to his recent experience of dealing directly with the pain of immigration, he was also more ready to relate to his son in a direct way without a medium of some third party. At first, Samuel had to face a host of reproaches his son threw at him about their early relationship, especially about being doted on too much for most of his life, and then being sent away for a year to a boarding school abroad where he felt neglected. Samuel was able to acknowledge the rightness of some of those reproaches without falling into an abyss of paralyzing guilt, which then could have prevented him from relating in an honest and open manner to his adult son. On the contrary, he managed to nurture their newly acquired connection, to see an equal in his child, and he was soon rewarded with a new level of trust from his son.

Occasionally, Samuel slips into an old mode of functioning and starts lecturing his son, but he is able to catch himself doing that when he observes a rupture in their rapport. Samuel redefined his concept of himself as a father and his level of responsibility for his son, from being a fully responsible food, shelter, and status provider for his family, to relating in a direct and equal way to his son, feeling for him, but not overstepping his individual boundaries. Samuel negotiated his transitions as a parent and as an immigrant in similar ways, through relating to important objects at first through a third party, or transitional object, and then in a direct way, which included acknowledging his pain and longing. He also allowed himself a space to react to changed objects in a flexible and appropriate way, thus creating situations where he could stay connected on a different level without the need to preserve his important objects in a

frozen state. Throughout this process, Samuel redefined his self-concept multiple times regarding his circle of interests, sets of roles, and the variety of expectations from himself and others.

Interaction with Gala in the interview process elicited strong counter-transferential feelings, by turns, positive and negative, from the interviewer, substantially more so than with the other participants. The mode of interaction with the outside world through feelings, not reflected on and not well processed on her part, may have played a role in this participant's immigration and parenthood path.

Gala's narrative had a very distinctive edge to it, in terms of constantly living through some extreme situations, which tested her survival skills and affected her trajectory as an immigrant and as a parent. However, after comparative analysis of these situations, it became clear that the majority of them were as much self-created as they were avoidable, if only they had not been such an intrinsic part of Gala's personality structure.

Gala defined her identity and self-concept as "utterly changed" after she became a mother, and then changed again during the immigration process. She, however, was not able to describe, even approximately, these changes, just like she has not been able to describe herself along any dimensions, the task easily performed by many other participants in this study. All the information about her feelings, beliefs, roles, and expectations had to be gathered through the analysis of her actions. It was also the only channel she herself has been able to employ in order to gain access to her feelings. When Gala described her decision-making around having her daughter who was born seven

years after her son was born, she mentioned a sense of urgency and fullness of life, which was reflected in childbirth and which was very distinctive from her feelings around having her first baby. Gala also alluded to some vague feelings of deficiency, even though she deemed herself to be the perfect wife and mother, around the time when she first visited her relative in the US. Her relative told her she looked like an undesirable woman, which was very different from her usually attractive self, and that phrase of his clicked and stayed with her. Next thing she knew, she was married to an American citizen and divorced from her husband. Gala's feelings of deficiency and marital dissatisfaction were not reflected on or processed in any way, but they were acted out in her decision to have children and to immigrate.

There were also several defenses, e.g., avoidance and doing-undoing, Gala used extensively and in a similar manner when dealing with her children and with the issue of immigration. For example, when she decided to immigrate, her ex-husband refused to give the children permission to leave the country. Gala settled down and made peace with that as well, deciding that "well, it was not her destiny to immigrate." When he finally gave them his permission, she immigrated immediately. In the most critical and anxiety provoking situations with her children, e.g., her son asking desperately for help, being overwhelmed by new and frightening experiences in New York, or her daughter gaining weight and feeling lonely, Gala tended to avoid direct contact with her children, unable to contain them. When the situation then became extreme, she attempted to undo the damage by taking back a portion of control and establishing some level of contact with them.

There was also a very strong similarity in the way Gala missed many subtle cues and details on her way of hurtling into the next extreme situation with her children or as an immigrant. Her daughter did not become morbidly obese overnight; it was a rather gradual process that Gala excluded from her focus of attention. In a similar way, her second husband, whom she barely knew before the marriage, kept telling her how difficult it was for him to wait for her for a year. Gala was not able to focus on anxiety provoking details that could clarify and guide her sense of reality, therefore she had to face a situation of being left to her own devices in a new country with two children when her husband told her in the airport that he had met someone else. It appeared that not only did her difficulties in reflective functioning not allow her to get a grip on other people's personalities and intentions, but also her inability to get in touch with her own feelings forced her to drive her relationships to extremes in order to gain some access to her feelings. From that point of feeling alive and knowing what she felt, Gala was able to repair the situation to an extent and feel relatively at peace with it.

Gala reported on being an incredibly devoted and in-tune mother during her first years of motherhood: when her little boy coughed, she coughed with him, which required her to be fully absorbed in her motherhood, while everything else had moved backstage. Her self-concept as a new immigrant was also so fluid at first that she "could have become whatever, ready to become whatever, ready to move stones around," which in both cases allowed her to fine-tune into the reality, and to achieve her goals with a temperamentally difficult child and in an extra-challenging immigration situation. A little later, Gala decided on her own accord that it was time to drop the ball with her son when her daughter was born, or with both of her children when they immigrated, even though

they were giving her indications that it was too early for them to have so much independence.

At her current stage of relationships with her children, Gala has settled on a more central position, allowing them a lot of freedom and respecting their individual boundaries, but exercising some level of control, which she did without processing her feelings about their separation. Similarly, in her immigration path, after the initial stage of extremely fluid self-concept that allowed her to incorporate many important elements and roles of the new reality, Gala settled on a position of preserving some cultural elements of her country of origin, while rejecting the country as a whole.

Even though German did not appear to be particularly guarded, he strived to be task-oriented in the interview process and to answer the interview questions in a relatively cut and dry manner. Therefore the interview with this participant was substantially shorter, compared to the rest of the participants. His main attitude when describing the events and transitions of his life was that of the inevitability of adjustment to his environment through internal changes. German's account of stages and shifts in his self-concept as an immigrant was more detailed, compared to that of himself as a parent. This disparity was understandable in light of German's expressed belief that it is utterly normal and expectable of children to grow and become more independent and for the parents to change as a response to this process. It appeared that his children's separation and his reaction to it were so ego-syntonic for German, that it did not become represented as a laborious process worth his specific attention. As opposed to that, immigration has

been a noticeably arduous path for German, therefore, his recollection of all the shifts in his environment and in his self-concept had a much more detailed character.

German spoke with great warmth about his son's arrival and early years. He was not particularly conscious about his longing for his son's early childhood stage, but he was very open about his tender feelings. German mentioned many changes in his habits, beliefs, and circle of interests that were determined by the adjustment of his early stage of marriage, and especially by him moving into parenthood. His son's first explorations of power struggles around the age of two, German welcomed with a sense of amusement and pride. Even though he, similarly to Tanya, perceived his son's stubbornness and strong will as character attributes rather than a developmental stage, he reacted to it in a way vastly different from Tanya's.

German was the only participant who left his country of origin with a conscious expectation of this move being a temporary arrangement; his purpose was to secure a green card for his family and himself and then come home to stay and work. However, in the process of immigration, he discovered that arrangement to be an unrealistic one when his family began to adjust to a new life in the US and he was stopped from frequent travels by the US custom's regulations for refugees. With that came a need for German to see this situation as bearable, which took a form of registering the further deterioration of the economy in his country of origin that "objectively" prevented him from working and making a profit there. There was enough evidence in German's narrative to assume that the perceived rapidity of economic changes was determined by German's need to start distancing himself from his country of origin.

German was one of the few participants whose letting go process of his country of origin was symmetrically balanced by taking in and adjusting to the new country at the same time. In German's case, he adaptively lowered his expectations, which allowed him to find a semiskilled job. This job provided him with an opportunity to learn the spoken language and to support his family. In order to protect himself from a narcissistic injury, German needed to stress that he was from a different socio-economic class than the rest of the factory workers, and that he had his independence there and was valued by factory management.

The next milestone on the immigration path became for German his decision to pursue professional classes in the high demand area remotely related to his professional expertise. It coincided with his visit, after a long break, to his country of origin where he found it even less suitable than before for living, because the majority of his friends had left, and the economy was in a deep hole. We could conceptualize his perception of the state of the matters as a purely defensive strategy, if he were not so open about his ever present longing for his country of origin, a longing that changes its intensity over time but remains as a consistent component in German's life. The time of his most recent visit to his country was also the time of his re-evaluating his previous plans for staying in the US only until the children grew up. "I restated my goals, and my perception changed as well," said German about his perception of the US. He started his immigration journey by being quite critical of the American culture and social system. After a few years in the country, German began to notice his increased ease and comfort, both in the professional area, and in terms of English language proficiency. With that came some interest in American cinematography, as well as a wish for a circle of English-speaking professional

contacts. German also directly linked his children's separation and individuation with them becoming more "Americanized." Even though he stressed the importance of Russian language for his family and his non-compromised position concerning this matter for his children, he also expressed understanding and acceptance of his children growing up American, with intrinsic to this culture roles and attributes.

As with the majority of participants, it was easier for German to describe his current stage of relationships with his children. He appeared to be very much at ease with their adolescent phase of development, which was especially noteworthy around the theme of his limited control over them. Those of the participants, who currently have adolescent children, tend to express both, a wish for more control and power and a fear of complete loss of control. German, on the contrary, was consistent in his description of his gradual relinquishing of control up until the current point, during which he serves as an advisor who is being "chronically amazed" that his advice is actually being taken seriously. He also spoke about instances in which with both, his son and his daughter, he had chosen to express his opinion as such, without reinforcing his parental authority, even though he felt he still could have made them obey his words. Instead, he had chosen to withdraw at some moments and allow his children to face the natural consequences of their behaviors. There were some differences in the content of interaction between German and his daughter and German and his son, e.g., he encouraged his son to pursue a non-skilled physically challenging summer job, and he attempted to discourage his daughter from a similar enterprise. German's ideas about teaching his children responsibility differed accordingly to what he perceived as their trajectory of development. However, his style of not forcing his opinion onto them, but rather

expressing it, and then leaving it up to them to follow or reject it, was similar in both relationships. All in all, it appeared that German's ability to change with his children developed and forged a strong connection between them; and his tendency to adjust to the demands of the environment, through internal change, allowed for flexible relationships with both, his new country and his country of origin.

Mikhail's style of narrating had a somewhat pressured quality; it appeared that his emotional flow was so strong that he simply had to keep talking in order to have a continuous outlet for his emotional states. That sense of urgency was not balanced by an ability to identify or to speak eloquently about his feelings, instead, Mikhail kept acting out his varied feelings by creating an emotionally charged and rapidly shifting atmosphere in the interview. The main motif in Mikhail's narrative was his need to prove to others that he had not changed in any way. It would be beyond the scope of this study to speculate extensively as to why his need to remain the same was so strong. It should be noted, however, that the intensity and frequency of this theme in Mikhail's narrative were such that it appeared a perspective of change was utterly terrifying for him and, possibly, representative of losing himself, his identity.

The similarities in Mikhail's style of relating to his children and to his country of origin were concrete and striking. Mikhail reported on his absolute inability to tolerate any situation of uncertainty. He recalled that, when his ex-girlfriend married someone else, he "was ready to marry everyone who was a little pregnant" by him, because he was not able to tolerate not knowing what to do, not having a steady girlfriend. When his next girlfriend, his future wife, informed him that she was pregnant, he spent several days in

what he described as the unbearable anguish of making a decision. After the decision to marry her was made, he followed through with relative ease.

Mikhail described the period of time when making his decision to emigrate as an agony because of his feeling that he was up in the air. In his own words, it was easier for him to decide to emigrate because everybody else was making the same decision, so that staying meant going against the mainstream. He reported not being capable of that and he did not want to prolong the misery of uncertainty.

Mikhail divided his immigration path into two distinctively different periods – the first two weeks and everything else; just like he divided his parenthood into two stages – the first seven years and everything else. Seemingly similar in terms of the form, the internal mechanisms of these divisions were different, although, possibly, related.

Mikhail acknowledged his tremendous joy of having children, that was, until they turned seven or eight. He preferred to be the primary caregiver for his daughter and for his sons. He enjoyed taking care of all their daily needs; he enjoyed the warmth and simplicity of their close contact, and, apparently, their full and unequivocal dependency on him.

Mikhail did not distinguish any stages in terms of their independence and development within those years, although he did remember many details of their early years that were emotional for him. It seemed that the only way Mikhail was able to stay connected to his children was through a direct, physical, and non-symbolic contact, which was the full opposite to Samuel's parenting style of forging a connection only when the child was well out of a raw preverbal and pre-symbolic stage.

As soon as the children moved into a latency stage with its developmental jumps in terms of more symbolic representation of relationships with parents, Mikhail felt as if

the contact was lost for him. Indeed, if he did not possess a capacity for object relations on a more symbolic level, he might have felt abandoned by them as soon as the children moved away from a direct physical contact and from the absolute dependency of their first years. In his other relationships, Mikhail showed the same pattern of being able to stay connected around objectified areas of functioning, e.g., strictly professional or sexual relationships. Mikhail reported on a life-long lack of friendships, the type of relationship that requires more symbolic connectedness. It is reasonable to presume that this participant's attempts to substitute for subjectively lost objects with new objects gave rise to his insatiable desire to have more children, which was mentioned many times throughout the interview. Any signs of his children's development would signify their separation from him; therefore, those signs were not in the focus of Mikhail's attention. It was virtually impossible to understand during the interview process when Mikhail spoke about his children, which child of what age Mikhail was referring to.

As it was mentioned earlier, Mikhail acknowledged his difficulties in handling ambiguous situations or feelings of uncertainty. His major concern, while preparing to immigrate, was his future inability to find employment in his professional area; inability especially devastating, because his professional identity constituted for him such a palpable core of his self-concept. All Mikhail's life efforts were aimed at preserving his self-concept unchanged, and to change his profession would mean to lose himself as a person. The torture of uncertainty concerning this matter lasted several months prior to his immigration and during his first two weeks in the country. Those two weeks were enough, according to Mikhail, to come to a conclusion that he did not have to change his occupation and that life in the US was "like a vacation." In other words, two weeks was

Mikhail's limit for bearing the emotional ambiguity of the situation. As soon as he gathered a bare minimum of first impressions about the country and earned his first money as a musician, he formed a distinctive idea of the country, which later on he only managed to confirm by various means. Mikhail's inability to contain a situation of uncertainty might be related to his general weakness in symbolizing, thus bringing us back to the peculiarities of his parenting style and the presence of only concrete relatedness to his children.

Mikhail's claim of staying the same during all his years of parenthood and immigration had such a consistent and urgent character that, apparently, any type or degree of change would signify for him losing his identity. For someone with such a major trend, we should not just rely on his account or self-description of himself as "not changed," but it is important to look for further clues for understanding the dynamics of his self-concept.

Mikhail had always defined himself through his profession; he regarded preserving intergenerational connections as his mission; and he has always been very passionate in his love and care for his small children, which all continue to be true to this day. All of these hallmarks of his personality had a steady and somewhat rigid quality throughout Mikhail's parenthood and immigration years. As especially vital matter he considered preserving his identity in the immigration process, the process which posed more threat to his sense of core self. The notion of going home and showing his acquaintances that he "did not become a rich and spoiled brat" was a frequent theme in Mikhail's narrative, thus confirming an idea of a fragile sense of self that required not only a constant flow of confirmation of the continuity of his self-concept, but also

mirroring by others, as it is the case during a much earlier developmental stage. When Mikhail did notice some change in his relationship with the new country, e.g., a little improvement in his language fluency, he immediately had to deny, or minimize it, battling his anxiety around this subject. He acknowledged his strong emotional reaction to the tragedy of the terrorist attack on 9/11, and then backed off, comparing it to his reaction to a boxing championship that was lost by a Ukrainian athlete, as if canceling out his sincere loyalty toward American society.

Mikhail's frantic attempt to preserve Russian culture took a form of literally feeding Russian food to his children and their friends, while consciously ignoring their refusal and discontent. Mikhail's inability to accept his children's separation from him found its reflection in his lack of desire to repair his damaged relationship with his oldest son. His middle son's ventures into the adult world Mikhail perceived as narcissistic injury, therefore, he reacted with a stream of insults and accusations in an attempt to inflict pain, instead of feeling and accepting his own pain of separation. The necessity to face the objective distance between him and his growing children was particularly difficult for this participant because of his inability to relate to his children on a more symbolic level. Mikhail encountered the situation of losing his close physical contact with them, without gaining new meaningful relationships.

As it was mentioned earlier, all of the above-named five participants belong to a group, which showed significant intra-individual similarities in their letting go processes of objects across two different life transitions. The second group of participants consists of individuals that again demonstrated strong similarities of their letting go style of

objects in parenthood and immigration processes, except for the areas that were conflict-ridden and defined by those conflicts, which colored their relationships with a particular object. Anna, Inga, and Dmitry all belonged to the second group, and the main trends of their narratives will be briefly discussed below.

Anna's narrative was distinct in the richness of her metaphoric language, and in the high level of responsibility and guilt she felt for those close to her. The guilt was conveyed, directly and indirectly, throughout her story. Anna's ability to not only go with a changing flow of events, but to take it in and be transformed by it was remarkably similar during her immigration and parenthood journeys. This similarity was pronounced up until a point when Anna encountered a situation in relation to her son that overwhelmed her coping strategies and left her relying on a boundary-less way of connecting with her young adult son.

The most easily accessible way of examining Anna's narrative was to follow the pattern of change in her self-concept, which was especially pronounced in her early parenthood years, as well as in the last few months prior to immigration. If before becoming a mother, Anna described herself in professional and relational terms, during the first few years of her son's life her existence was defined mostly in the relational realm, a realm that became very detailed and animated during that period of time. Anna described her relationship with her little son as very close and constantly changing during his first years. She marveled at his baby attributes, but never failed to notice signs of growth and maturation; enjoyed and felt pride in his first independent steps and his developing skills.

Anna recalled feeling “in the top” shape of her physical, intellectual, and emotional abilities around the time the decision to emigrate was made. Even though she initially felt more hesitant, compared to her husband, about this decision, she conceptualized immigration as an adventure that might open up new opportunities for her as she began to refresh her English and make professional connections while still in Russia. Her husband, according to her, in the last months prior to immigration concentrated on saying good-bye and mourning, thus being a convenient vessel for containing Anna’s possible sadness around leaving her country. Similarly, he was also the one voicing fears about hereditary mental illness that runs in his family when both of them were making a decision to have a child. It is highly unlikely that a similar thought had never crossed Anna’s mind, yet she only mentioned his fears. Her main strategy when encountering a challenging situation in both the domains of immigration and parenthood was to conceptualize it as an opportunity and to concentrate on the future. Besides projecting her fears and sadness onto her husband, Anna also employed another, more productive way of processing her feelings toward her country of origin that did not even require her acknowledging her sadness. Anna created concrete and palpable ways of staying in touch with the attributes of her country of origin that were valuable for her through communicating with some of her friends, reading in Russian, attending exhibitions, etc. She, however, was able to notice the changing quality of her connections with friends and relatives that stayed in her country of origin, confirming her ability to notice and accept change and reflect it in the development of her self-concept. A few years into immigration, Anna also made a beautifully decorated photo album of “people who left,” meaning her and her husband’s deceased relatives. She created it, keeping in

mind that her son and his future children might be willing to take a look at it, even if only for the sake of its art value, hence keeping a connection with the family's past and, indirectly, keeping the country of origin alive.

Anna defined as the very first difficult separation for her a development in the mother-child relationship that occurred when her son was about twelve years old. Around that time, he stopped sharing information about himself and his feelings with his mother. It was remarkable that the boy had chosen a verbal channel in his separation efforts, because all the other realms, including physical independence and independent decision making, were already open for him. Lack of honest sharing was the most powerful leverage he could employ to define his boundaries on his own accord. That change opened up a new era in the mother-son relationship, an era that was characterized by the increase in independent functioning on both sides, including Anna's somewhat counter-phobic steps. She "started to trust him completely;" she went on a trip to the US, while for the first time leaving her son with his father for about six months. This trend of quite abrupt separation from their adolescent children was relatively common among participants, which might have constituted a preventive measure on the parents' part that allowed them to decrease the narcissistic injury of being pushed away by their separating children. With that said, Anna continued to describe a strong bond between her and her son during his adolescent years, and continued to derive pride from his independent steps, e.g., autonomous decision-making, or starting to date. A major shift in an opposite direction occurred when Anna's son was in his second and third years of college and, in Anna's opinion, not doing well.

The major theme of Anna's narrative was her tendency to protect and care that had an all-embracing quality to it. Her "being a Jewish mother" also included a very strong component of responsibility and guilt that propelled her to consider the misfortunes and imperfections of significant people in her life as her own fault. This tendency reached its apotheosis in the relation to her son and became reflected in her inability to distinguish his problems from her own, while she was perfectly capable of seeing his victories and triumphs as his own achievements, which, of course, gave her some narcissistic satisfaction as well. It created an interesting combination in which when the boy was doing fine, from Anna's perspective, the boundaries between them were clear and unequivocal, but when he experienced difficulties, she felt utterly responsible for those. Not to say that Anna's son had never experienced any difficulties before, but during his college years he made a series of steps that, in Anna's eyes, could potentially undermine his future prospects of becoming an accomplished and happy individual, e.g., he cut down his circle of friends; significantly gained weight, etc. Keeping in mind Anna's orientation to the future as the main coping strategy, one can only imagine how frightening it was for her to bear witness to those changes in him. It chipped away at the foundation of her emotional stability, overwhelming her coping strategies. Under such stress, the boundaries between them melted on her part, as she was looking into the past in search for her earlier shortcomings that would explain her son's current difficulties.

The above-described change in Anna's way of relating to her adult child created a discrepancy between her styles of letting go in parenthood, compared to the immigration process, a discrepancy that had never been present before. As an immigrant, Anna continues to describe her self-concept as changing in several areas, while she is actively

engaged in the exploration of a new professional realm, as well as in creating new personal connections in the art sphere. The deep feeling of belonging surprised her during one of the Manhattan art “happenings,” as she recounted why similar events held in Moscow did not fit her personality. At the same time, Anna stays in touch with multiple components of the contemporary Russian culture, thus allowing herself to nurture an existing connection with her country of origin, while she is engaged in the gradual process of separating from it.

I am sure that all researchers employing individuals’ narratives have those moments of feeling as if they had just met their perfect subject, whose life story fully backs up their research idea. This, of course, does not mean the feeling will be lasting, but nevertheless, it is an uncannily pleasant one. I had that experience while interviewing Inga and then analyzing her narrative, which had a theme of changing and growing together with one’s children as the leitmotif of her story. Inga’s connections with objects in the immigration process and in the parenthood journey had a similar fluidity, with the exception of one distinctive period of time of her relating to her older son that was colored by difficulties in her own separation-individuation process.

Inga’s account of the adjustment to her role as a parent might be called the most detailed out of all the participants. Even though the birth of her first child was a generally happy event, Inga was also in touch with her ambivalence about her role as a mother and about the baby’s gender, which might be related to her history of physical abuse by her father. In addition, after Inga’s free and exciting college years, it was a rocky process for her to adjust to the situation when she became intimately tied to the baby. She was patient

with herself, allowing time and space to fall in love with her son, “The more I looked at him, the more I liked him.” Inga was frank about her difficulties in having somebody else, even her own child, to be fully physically dependent on her in all his daily needs. She was able to give herself space to express her ambivalence, but she denied her husband the same right. As a result, he experienced even more resentment, which, in its turn, allowed Inga, through the means of projective identification and displacement, to defend against the anxieties of that transitional period.

Inga’s general approach during her son’s early childhood years concerning his first independent steps was of taking things slowly and moving with the flow. Even though she described in similar ways her bonds to her first child and to her second one, born ten years later, as incredibly strong one during the first years of her children’s lives, she also pinpointed significant differences. Inga felt that with her younger daughter she had a perception of the girl as a very separate individual with distinctive desires and character traits from early on. Inga “experienced her as a separate person,” as opposed to her older son who was much more of her own extension during his early years. This tendency had a more subtle manifestation, compared to Tanya who simply denied her little daughter a right to have her own wishes. Inga was able to notice and tolerate well her son’s first steps toward independence, e.g., his request at the age of six that she should not be present while he was in a shower. Her inability to perceive him as a separate individual became reflected in her high and, possibly, quite harsh demands on him, which, as she retrospectively pondered, might have influenced his self-concept negatively. Especially prominent was this tendency around the issues of school performance where she felt he was evaluated for the first time by the outside world. Inga

was not able to tolerate him not being academically among the best, because her deep fusion with him made her feel evaluated herself. As Inga pinpointed in her narrative, it was a period of time when she felt dissatisfied with many components of her life, mostly because, after many years under the strong influence of her mother, she had just started to experience a sense of agency in her life, and then promptly “switched hands” and became a wife and a mother. Her husband’s professional and military status defined her position in their social circle as secondary, as the “wife of lieutenant T.,” which conveniently robbed her from a necessity to define herself at that period of time. I say “conveniently,” because, apparently, at that time, Inga still struggled with the issue of self-identification and separation from her family of origin. Only later did she become capable of developing a sense of agency that allowed her to relate to her children as separate individuals, without a need to substitute her feeling of self-worth with their success.

Similarly to her transition into parenthood, Inga was very much in touch with both positive and negative impressions of the initial immigration process. Again, out of all the participants, she was the only one who considered her relocations between different cities within her country of origin as immigrations as well, even if on a smaller scale, all of which had prepared her for the final move. As with many other participants, Inga started her separation process from her country of origin while she was still in the FSU. Her perceptions of that reality became more in sync with the negative and painful components of it; and, in addition, she had the task of “weaning” her husband from his bond to his old country and his stable position in it, thus again dealing with her own feelings around loss through projective identification.

Inga's account of the first days in New York had a vivid and palpable quality to it, memories of the poor and suffocating apartment mixed with the impression of a versatile and vibrant Upper West Side. Interestingly enough, usually quite multi-dimensional, Inga's self-concept in relation to her country of origin had a somewhat simplistic and rigid quality during her first steps in the new country, which had served a defensive function. She denied herself the pleasure of reading or watching TV in Russian for a few years, in an attempt to speed up English language acquisition. She recalled her friends left in the FSU with a sense of compassion, as she wanted to "feed them all." Both strategies helped her to battle all doubts and fears about her decision to immigrate by limiting her Russian involvement and by feeling in control through taking care of others.

Inga's relationship with the new country was far from rigid or one-dimensional. She was able to be open and selectively receptive towards new customs, culture and the set of roles that became available to her. Even though at the beginning Inga's activities were centered on her childcare responsibilities, she managed to find possibilities for socializing and exploring the new society. She befriended many people in her multicultural community; she stayed closely in touch with her son's school staff, and, as soon as her daughter was out of babyhood, Inga found a job close to her professional area. Her self-concept changed over those years as she defined herself as "Russian from Washington Heights." This definition, she felt, fit snugly, encompassing her country, or rather, culture of origin, and her newly acquired feeling of belonging to American culture, which she perceived as diverse and agile.

Inga's understanding of herself and her self-perception was changing steadily over the years of immigration. She felt that she became substantially stronger as a person

and as a woman. Her wishes became clearer, and she found them to be more attainable. Always a highly social person, she created a circle of friends, both Russian- and English speaking, which added to her sense of life satisfaction. In terms of Inga's professional community, according to her description, it was not a matter of changing herself, but rather of finding what fit best. Inga's areas of expertise had not changed drastically over the years, but the approach employed in the new country she found to be much more "hers," therefore she feels substantially happier and more challenged in her professional area in the new country. With all that said, Inga did not exhibit negation and avoidance of her country of origin. On the contrary, after the initial, somewhat frozen, stage of relationship with Russia, Inga became very accepting and open in her expressing her longing and love for Russian culture and the reality of her country of origin. Some mild tendencies for intellectualization were present, when she was involved in comparing the two countries' medical and educational systems, but all in all, these tendencies were substantially less dominant, compared to the other participants. Inga strived to "mix and match, and swim freely" in this reality, as she experienced a sense of belonging to both countries and both cultures.

Inga's absence of counter phobic abrupt separations was remarkable, both in the immigration process and in her relationships with growing children. The best example of the gradualism of her transition would be Inga's navigating her son's early adolescent years. These years coincided with Inga's first immigration steps and her daughter's infancy and toddlerhood. It could have become easy for her to mistake her desire to free herself at that difficult time for her son's own quest for independence, as it was in the case of Lena or Anna, and push him away. Instead, Inga appeared to be extra cautious not

to give the boy more freedom than he could handle, while she stayed closely involved in so many aspects of his life. At the same time, she recalled areas where she consciously stopped herself from making a final decision on his behalf, and, instead, provided the boy with space to make his own decisions. She felt that this strategy was preparing him for the time when he “became more on his own,” e.g., traveling back and forth to a high school located in another part of the city. Inga acknowledged the growth to be bi-directional, stating that through allowing her son to make small decisions, she prepared herself for a situation, when his decisions became substantial, and, possibly, life-changing, e.g., his decision not to pursue a career as a professional ballet dancer, even though he and his family had put many years of preparation and resources into that. According to Inga, her feeling more satisfied and actualized, “more herself,” during the last few years allowed her to relate to her children as to independent individuals. She supplied this statement with examples of how she now perceives her six-year old daughter’s academic achievements and failures as the girl’s own, which allows Inga a necessary distance to react in a softer, more appropriate manner, compared to her reaction in a similar situation with her son ten years ago. Inga sees herself as substantially changed, which allows her to change and grow together with her children and negotiate her transitions as an immigrant through accepting her own and objects’ transformations.

The interview with Dmitry had a very argumentative air to it, with Dmitry not being openly confrontational, but rather subtly provocative and challenging. Even though the format of the interview was not intended to provide space for an exchange of opinions, I, as an interviewer, frequently found myself, with this participant, being pulled

into a situation of having to express my opinion and then having to defend it. It differed substantially from my experience with the other participants and provided me with ample opportunities not only to obtain Dmitry's verbal account of how important it was for him to stand out from the crowd, but also to bear witness to the enactments of this theme in his relational realm.

Dmitry described the decision-making processes in immigration and parenthood in similar terms of "being ready" to have a child and to immigrate without actually ever making a deliberate choice. Dmitry was willing to immigrate many years prior to the event, but his father, as head of the whole household, preferred to stay put because of his own successful career. As soon as the father decided that immigration remained the only option, Dmitry and his wife happily consented. When Dmitry got married, he knew that "it was a natural flow of events to have a child,...felt normal about it" but it was his wife who was eager to have a child and became anxious when they could not conceive for a year. This passive but "willing" position allowed Dmitry to disown the positive and negative aspects of the decision-making process and to use others as a container for his possible anxieties. This strategy was actually quite common among the participants of this study, but it had always led to conflict-ridden relationships with those people who were used as objects of projection and containment for the participants.

It appeared in this study that the participants who vehemently denied any changes in their personalities and set of roles in transitional periods were people who had various difficulties in developing and maintaining their self-concepts. It was vitally important for participants like Uri, Mikhail, and Lena, to maintain their sense of self-coherency, which apparently reflected their chronic difficulties in this area. Their account of the absence of

change was also congruent with their descriptions of themselves, their roles, and circle of friends and acquaintances.

In Dmitry's case, even though he claimed at the beginning that he essentially stayed the same during fatherhood and immigration, this statement was challenged by his own account of his changing world-views, values, and set of roles and expectations. If before the birth of his twin daughters, Dmitry's world centered mostly on his work and his self-growth, during the first months of fatherhood it changed dramatically to include attention and care for his daughters. The theme of being different from everybody else, in this case, became reflected in him becoming a maternal type in a culture that prescribed that fathers have a certain level of detachment from providing direct care and nurturance for their children. Dmitry enjoyed every moment of their growth and development; he remembered and treasured their antics, and the first signs of developing individualities. He described their personalities as very different from day one, and expressed curiosity about the trajectory of their development. The main notion of Dmitry's self-concept at that time was his changed sense of responsibility and his newly discovered desire to invest in his children.

Even though, as I mentioned earlier, Dmitry exhibited a tendency to project and deny his anxieties around decision-making processes, during the early stage of immigration he possessed enough ego-strength to allow him to acknowledge and accept his quite strong fears of the unknown and the anxiety of relocating with a large family. It appeared that his ability to work through those feelings allowed Dmitry to be open and flexible in the first stages of adjusting to a new country. Even before the actual move, he started the letting go process by summing up his professional achievements and

concluding that he had exhausted all the mentorship resources in his native country, thus he had nothing more to learn there. It appeared that this notion reflected Dmitry's attempt to stir up the separation process from his country, because he generally expressed a high level of satisfaction with his professional development in his country of origin. Starting out the separation process relatively early and freeing emotional space by acknowledging and accepting his anxieties, allowed Dmitry to adopt and utilize a position of openness and flexibility at the very beginning of immigration. He did not have a set view on what he was supposed to become in the new country. Instead, he picked a few short-term goals, e.g., acquiring new language as soon as possible, supporting his family during that transitional period, which were not only reasonable, but also provided him with a sense of mastery and achievement, as he worked hard and reached several palpable milestones on his way. Dmitry, as opposed to Samuel, who was not able to make a leap from short-term to long-term goals, made this move with self-assurance, feeling that if he would be able to enjoy what he was doing professionally, it would also bring him financial stability and life satisfaction.

After the initial orientation and rapid adjustment stages of immigration, Dmitry, in his own words, "settled down" with a stable job and a stable circle of friends and activities. Dmitry, at the present moment, regrets dearly his "lack of strivings and absence of change" at that period of time, because, according to him, it provided him with a false sense of security and relaxed him so much that he had become completely unprepared for the professional difficulties that were lying ahead. Dmitry's relationships with both countries at that period of time were reflected in his constant intellectual comparison of them along many dimensions, e.g., the strong side and shortcomings of the rehabilitation

medicine and massage industry in the US and in the FSU; different approaches to preserving historical artifacts, etc. If the other participants, for example Lena, who utilized a more primitive set of defenses, ended up strongly and rigidly favoring one country over another, Dmitry praised himself for his ability to be objective and to pay each country its due. Nevertheless, dealing with his conflicts around the two countries through the defense of intellectualization, without acknowledging the possible source of conflicted feelings, did not allow for a dynamic resolution of his feelings, bringing about a certain stagnation of the letting go process during the advanced immigration stage.

Another reason for Dmitry to cling to some zone of comfort on his immigration path could have been his marital discord that brought about very strong emotional turmoil and feelings of unsettlement for him. The few areas of familiarity and calm left for Dmitry were his job, his circle of friends, and his hobbies. Dmitry reported on relatively chronic marital troubles around the issue of his authority, or lack of it, in the family. These difficulties were aggravated by financial struggles at the beginning stage of immigration. The event that became the last straw for Dmitry, was an incident when his daughters reacted with a stream of rude and loud comments on his reasonable, according to him, request concerning using their room for a couple of hours for his birthday party. In order to put that event and his reaction in context, we need to take a closer look at Dmitry's relationships with his daughters during their latency transitions, a stage that was vastly different along the lines of his not being able to relinquish his authority. If before Dmitry cherished and felt proud of his daughters' every independent step, the situation changed drastically during the latency transition, when their independent strivings moved from physical territory into the intellectual realm of having their own opinions and

wanting to be acknowledged and listened to. The question of why this new trend was so threatening for Dmitry goes beyond the scope of this study and into the area of character analysis. Let me just mention that Dmitry's nuclear family, according to him, was an example of a model where a father has absolute power in the family, including his adult children's families long into their adulthood. It should not come as a surprise that it was challenging for Dmitry to feel secure about his own independent strivings as an adolescent and as a young adult, but it also promised him the same absolute power when he would be old enough to be the head of his own extended household. Apparently, his wife's take on the issue of power and authority in the family differed substantially from his, and his hopes for eventual payback in terms of power, at least in his immediate family, were proven to be erroneous. His daughters' age-appropriate attempts to limit their father's control over their behaviors and actions were perceived by him as ultimate narcissistic injury. Dmitry tried to keep his tremendous anxiety and pain around this issue at bay, by externalizing and blaming the new society and his wife for his children's behaviors, without ever acknowledging it as a developmental stage. This, however, was not enough, and Dmitry had to literally separate himself from his family in order to survive this challenge.

Distance and a different set of issues, Dmitry had to deal with during his daughters' early adolescent transitions, allowed him to regain his ability to adjust relatively flexibly and effectively to their independent strivings. Dmitry became once again curious about their individual differences and their unique styles of getting through developmental hassles. He yet again conceptualized many of their behaviors as developmental stages and transitions, which helped him put some of their interpersonal

difficulties and “unpleasantness” into perspective. Dmitry regrets his inability to be a more consistent presence in the girls’ life after the divorce took place, but his guilt does not have a paralyzing quality to it, and he is still able to enjoy his role as a father of “quite grown” daughters. Even though some of his methods of parental influence appeared to be quite harsh, Dmitry’s general trend can be described as that of acceptance that “children grow; they must.”

Dmitry’s current stage of immigration is characterized by two subjective tendencies: he has a sense of cultural belonging, but also he feels pretty unsettled professionally, when he, after many “comfortable and quiet” years, had to expand his professional field significantly in order to make a living. It is important to note that Dmitry accepts his responsibility in making previous choices that played a role in his current situation; he does not externalize, and does not blame others, as was the case during his children’s latency transitions. His ability to acknowledge and accept his feelings allows Dmitry to deal with his professional struggles in an upfront and effective manner. This does not prevent him from using externalization as the main defense when dealing with an issue of competition with others. Dmitry consistently derives his sense of self-worth from the results of his work being better by so many pounds and inches. This tendency may appear to be a natural derivative of a personal trainer’s career, but for Dmitry, it has been a life-long trend of maintaining his sense of self-integrity through favorably comparing himself to others along some external dimensions. With that said, it does not prevent him from being able to adjust successfully to the changing demands of his professional field and from being able to modify accordingly his self-concept as a professional.

I paid so much attention to this aspect of Dmitry's life because, as with many other male participants, he reported on measuring his subjective level of comfort in the new country along the lines of his professional adjustment. Another important component of Dmitry's feeling of social belonging encompassed his incorporating American history, literature, and media, into his cultural arsenal. The letting go process appeared to be curtailed along certain dimensions, for example, Dmitry claimed total indifference to the idea of visiting his country of origin. However, if we analyze this statement in light of his frequent tendency to orient himself according to external signs, it becomes apparent that this participant could not continue to be attached to the country and the city, which lacked his friends and familiar streets. Instead, his object of attachment became scattered among different countries, which now are housing his close friends and co-workers. Dmitry's sense of himself as a "Russian-speaking Jew" became stronger after immigration, according to him. It pertains to his devotion to Russian literature, history, and politics. This participant deals with nostalgic feelings toward the FSU through critical analysis of different historical periods in his country of origin, and coming to conclusions that help him gradually detach himself from it. Intellectualization, as with all but one male participant of this study, appeared to be an effective defense and also a channel for indirectly dealing with the anxieties of letting go processes. Politics turned out to be the intellectual space for Dmitry to watch his reactions change over time towards both countries. Dmitry described his response to the terror attacks in New York and in Moscow in identical, and quite emotional, terms, thus offering a notion of incorporating both countries as internal objects of attachment for him. And yet again, even though he depicts himself as not changed in the process of immigration, as he "was not changed" by

parenthood, the analysis of Dmitry's life along various dimensions offers a different view on this matter, showing his self-concept changing in all significant areas of the professional, social, and, to a degree, emotional realms.

The last group of participants consisted of individuals whose styles of letting go of objects were vastly different during immigration and parenthood. For the reason that only two participants, out of ten, belonged to this group, it would not be reasonable to claim that I have anything more than an educated guess about the possible reason(s) for this discrepancy, or that I observed a common trend among them. In one of the two participants, Lena, it appeared that a combination of two factors: her abhorrence to the idea and the reality of immigration, and her difficulties in reflective functioning in the absence of a concrete object – played a crucial role in the discrepancy of Lena's letting go styles. Uri, as a second member of this group, demonstrated strong similarities in relation to two objects – his country of origin and his son. This participant's process of letting go of his daughter diverged so substantially, that it allowed me to infer a different mechanism of his attachment to her and, as a result, a different process of separating from her.

The major theme of Uri's narrative, and his most favorite topic, was going through a midlife crisis, which was vaguely defined by him as rethinking the major life values and trying not to have any all-consuming preoccupations, like job or money. In the interview process, Uri noted several times that it was easier and less painful in the last couple of years to turn his attention to his inner life, than to continue to attend to others in

his life, thus acknowledging the presence of suppression, intellectualization, and denial as defenses that occasionally work well for him. However, when the line of the conversation inadvertently touched upon the theme of marital relationship, which was painful for him, Uri's plunging into repeating the main mantra-like statements of his philosophy resembled a trance state, bordering on dissociation. There were only a few moments like that in the interview, but they demonstrated the extent of pain he was living through, as well as the level of defenses this, otherwise high functioning, adult had to turn to in order to ward off emotional anguish.

There were many similarities between the way Uri conducted himself as a parent to his first child and as an immigrant concerning his style of letting go of an object. The level of passivity concerning decision-making in the cases of having his first child and deciding to emigrate was striking. He created a situation with a displaced object choice in which he had to decide not about the child per se, but whether or not to keep the relationship with his wife-to-be; and not about emigration per se, but whether or not to continue to be a part of his immediate family. Even though those were the questions posed to him by his wife and her parents, the situation only reflected his primary inability to take responsibility for being in charge of a decision-making process. The aggression that accumulated against the forced circumstances of immigration resulted in a passive-aggressive attitude toward job search at the initial stage of immigration, which once again was a displacement of anger aimed at members of his extended family. It was reminiscent of Uri's rigid and harsh stance toward his son, especially in his early childhood years, the boy being a safer object for his emotional aggression, compared to his wife. Negativity aimed at her could pose a threat of rupturing the whole relationship with his wife, a risk

that Uri was not about to take. Instead, Uri recalled his strictness towards his son and occasional lack of consideration, e.g., never allowing the boy in their bed, even when he had nightmares; or sending the boy to school in the US to the third grade without any preparation, even though it was his first schooling experience. All of the above, Uri considered as his own reaction to the rupture of “old ways of living, freer ways of living,” and subconsciously blamed his son for that. There were traces of guilt in Uri’s musings about it, with the time elapsed having created a distance that allowed for his analysis to be a safe enterprise.

The only way Uri had been able to talk about his son’s development was to discuss his sexual maturation on a very concrete level. As soon as he started to see a sexually mature man in his son, around the boy’s eighteen birthday, Uri jumped from close supervision to no supervision for his son. He exhibited the same concreteness when asked about his connections with his country of origin, which he understood as talking to and visiting or inviting over his relatives. The conflict of being between two countries was never acknowledged or reflected on. Instead, it became externalized as a loyalty conflict between his immediate and extended family. All Uri’s attempts to resolve that conflict stayed within this concrete realm of intra-familial hassle with no attempts to understand it in a broader context. .

In general, Uri’s main approach toward any kind of difficult issues was to go directly from the sensory mode to intellectualization, bypassing the sphere of feelings. For example, during Uri’s incredibly difficult visit to his country of origin to see his fatally ill parents, this participant recalled only the sensory components of his stay, including gray and biting cold weather. His friends also appeared not to welcome him,

which he attempted to explain away by their different levels of material well-being. While painting a factually complex and telling picture of his stay in the FSU, Uri was utterly unable to address his feelings during or about that visit. In cases when feelings became too strong to ignore, Uri resorted to dissociation thus blocking his access to feelings by a stronger means. This approach generally worked for registering change, e.g., Uri noted without hesitation that he “stopped associating himself with Russia after four-five years” in the US. However, he was entirely unable to expand on what he meant by that, confirming his inability to understand the process of change through solely analyzing the sensory and intellectual components of the reality. This participant complained about being clueless when confronted with some of the memories and feelings his son shared with him of his earlier childhood: Uri could not understand the origin of those feelings. Relationships did not develop as a process for him, but rather as separate encounters, therefore, in spite of his multiple attempts, he could not understand the roots and complexities of his connections with members of his immediate family, specifically with his wife and his son.

Uri’s self-concept had a stable, frozen quality to it. The only evident change in it pertained to its structure that, similarly to Inga’s case, became somewhat flattened during the initial stage of immigration, and only in a few years regained its multidimensionality. Uri did acknowledge his bewilderment and discomfort during the first few months of immigration, but, according to him, after the first few months, he stopped considering himself an immigrant. Currently, he describes his national belonging as, “I do not remember myself Russian. I am here. I had the same life (over there).” He was not able to pinpoint a time period over which that change happened, in fact, the only

distinctive stage of immigration for Uri was the first few months in the new country, when he actually felt uprooted. Apparently, those emotions over that time span exhausted his ability to cope with strong feelings, without resorting to varied defenses. The quote mentioned above, for example, illustrated Uri's process of evacuation of an old reality and taking in a new one in a frozen form without a process of letting go or attaching, but rather in one gulp. The new reality, however, had to have the same stability and permanence in order for Uri to feel at ease within it. He did allow for an initial period of adjustment and adaptation, e.g., he made some extra efforts to learn the English language, but, according to Uri, as soon as he learned enough to get by in his professional world, all his efforts in that area had ceased. Only his "midlife crisis" that initially developed as a defense created some turmoil leading to partial changes in his self-concept over the past few years concerning his roles and values, but those changes appeared not to be internalized enough, so they require constant conscious maintenance efforts on his part. Uri's current relationship with his country of origin was well described by this participant when talking about his "empty" identification with Russia, "I say I am Russian, but it is like reading a line from a file." Only one other participant, Lena, described her relationship with her country of origin in similar terms, stating that no distance, but only complete blocking out of the old reality allowed her to feel safe and functioning under new circumstances.

All the above-mentioned features created a process, in which Uri demonstrated an inability to let go of objects – his country and his son's dependency. He also was not able to create a space that would allow him to take in any part of a new culture or new reality; or to have a nurturing relationship with his son and foster the boy's

independence at the same time. His relationship with his daughter had a different flavor from the very beginning. It was less conflict-ridden in terms of his displaced aggression as she was a desired and planned child. Oedipal issues still so prominent in his current relationship with his son were absent with his daughter. Therefore, Uri was able to be more confident in expressing his love and affection, more able to see her as a separate individual, fostering her independence. Because of his style of taking in/evacuating the reality as a whole, it was still difficult for Uri to see the process of her development, but he was much more successful in this regard, for example, he was able to see a connection between allowing her to have pocket money from early on and to spend it as she pleased, and her ability to be mature and cautious in money issues at the present time. Although a component of idealization was present in Uri's relationship with his daughter, it can not be described as pure idealization on his part, because it appeared that Uri was able to leave enough room for his and her shortcomings, including accepting the fact that his daughter is, at times, substantially closer to his wife than to him. Interestingly, it appeared that Uri followed his daughter's development, especially after her early adolescent years, with such curiosity as if he were watching his own life path happening under ideal circumstances and minimal external pressures. Probably a far-fetched assumption on my part, but an opportunity to live an alternative route of his life vicariously through his daughter allowed him to adjust his parenting style to the changing needs of his growing daughter even though this change did not expand into other areas of his life. All in all, it can be said that Uri's virtually conflict-free relationship with his daughter created a fertile and safe ground for him to accept her on every level of her development.

One of my main agendas while interviewing Lena quickly became not to disturb what felt like a very fragile equilibrium of her defenses. It appeared that she was defending against what might have become unbearable anxiety at any given moment. Even though I was somewhat aware of a possible secondary gain on her part of my accepting a “walking on egg-shells” approach towards her, I decided to follow my clinical gut feeling and probe only gently, and observe rather than challenge, probably at the expense of gathering less information than I could have had otherwise.

Lena compared her feelings toward her country of origin to sentiments about a broken vase, “You used to have it, but you don’t any more. End of story!” This articulated so powerfully her way of dealing with, or rather defending against painful feelings, by blocking them from her consciousness. She chunked her reality along a temporal dimension so that only the present was accessible to feelings. Therefore, only a factual comparison was possible for her, and not a processual one where she could have a look at the different states of her mind or her relationships. She employed the defense of compartmentalization extensively, both in the content and in the structure of her narrative, which created an amazing effect of continuous discontinuity. Her story, even though without any apparent breaks, was held together only by the virtue of her style of narrating and not by the stream of content.

In spite of this tendency, Lena was able to describe briefly, but eloquently, a decision-making process around her first baby, as well as her son’s early developmental milestones, which all involved using temporal dimension, so inaccessible when describing her immigration process and the decision-making around it. When asked about different components of her self-concept, Lena was usually unable to relate anything

about herself. The only instance, out of many attempts, when Lena was able to describe herself multi-dimensionally, with very little prompting, was concerning her sense of self when her son was very little. Even though we cannot compare one self-description to another, only the presence of it to its absence, it still provides us with important information. At that instance, she was able to summarize, to bring a certain level of generalization and abstraction into her musing about what she was like and what her life was like at a certain period. Even though it seemed to be restricted to a specific time-period, I would argue that, in order to be able to do that, Lena had to use temporal dimension in a flexible way, comparing and contrasting different periods of her life. It appeared that the presence of her son, and her life happily revolving around his needs, provided her with a necessary structure and enabled her to observe her own developments.

Immigration, according to Lena, was not by her initiative, to say the least. However, active protests or acknowledgment of her disdain towards her husband's decision to immigrate were absent from her arsenal of emotional reactions to that situation. Instead, upon her arrival to New York, she discovered her complete and utter inability to take in any amount of the English language, and her overwhelming feelings of ineptness and humiliation when confronted with the new reality of automated banking, complicated pay phones, etc. There were traces of similar sentiments in the narratives of two other participants, Uri and Mikhail, but they never reached that intensity, and these participants did not define their self-concept through the prism of those feelings, the way Lena did, initially, and continues to do at the present time. My last statement is based on Lena's constant substitution of the past tense for the present,

particularly when speaking about the feelings of incompetence in many areas of her life. In addition, she directly mentioned several times that her level of English language proficiency does not allow her to feel a part of American society or culture, or, in fact, as an equal partner in virtually any conversation. For the reason that this aspect of life was incredibly important to her, Lena's feeling that she is "nothing" became her unrelenting companion. Lena's feelings of being reduced to nothingness by the challenges of immigration, the extent of her narcissistic injury can, at least partially, be explained by her defensive present time concentration, when she could not project herself into the future as a more competent human being, and, possibly, could not even use her past self-concept of a capable adult.

As it was mentioned before, Lena's relationship with her country of origin was described by her as non-existing from the first months of immigration. In order to survive the unbearableness of her new reality, she had to literally destroy the old reality in her mind. When Lena, relatively recently, accepted an invitation by several old friends and came to visit Russia, her trip only confirmed what she knew all along – she did not feel the longing, or pain and joy of recognition, she was utterly "feeling-less," except for some curiosity, curiosity that is expected when visiting virtually any country for the first time. Naturally, suppression, splitting, and compartmentalization by definition do not allow for working through the pain of immigration. Therefore, Lena was left with pockets of pain, scattered along many dimensions of her personality; pockets so numerous that they presented her with a constant high level of signal anxiety, which became reflected in my instinctively cautious approach to the interview process with this participant.

Lena's relationship with the new country can be described as steady rejection of all possible elements of the new reality. Lena did not demonstrate any dynamic developments in that regard, her depictions of the encounters with everything "American" were not possible to place in time without careful questioning. The only area that differed significantly in that regard was her professional development, in which Lena now feels much more actualized, compared to the way she felt in Russia. Her new occupation, the one she leaned towards since she was a little girl and decided to acquire in the US, where she was not under the influence of her parents' opinions, had brought her satisfaction and feelings of competency in the professional area. She had tangible points of reference in that regard when she spoke about many years of working for the same company and having had excellent feedback from her customers. It appeared that those points of reference and the general positive stance in the professional area allowed Lena to be able to have a continuous sense of professional self that she was able to observe in its development.

Lena's relationships with her children and her observations concerning their mutual separation were vastly different in terms of the letting go of an object, compared to her relationship with the country of origin. The most crucial difference appeared to be in Lena's ability to actually experience the letting go process as a continuous and gradual progression. Lena demonstrated a good understanding of the need to separate for the children's and her common benefit. She acknowledged the necessity of the process and the difficulties involved in it. The only aspect apparently lacking in her retrospective analysis of different situations from her first son's early childhood, was an attempt to

grasp individual characteristics of her son that would enable her and us to understand better the amplitude of his reactions.

In her attitude concerning her adolescent son's substantial steps towards independence, Lena was able to maintain a complex point of view. She described it, seemingly, as her initiative out of a necessity. At the same time, she pinpointed the good timing of this move, and the boy's appreciation of newly acquired freedom. In addition, she mentioned that her son has not been left to his own devices, but rather "switched hands." We could assume that his father's close guidance was still less close than the mother's was, thus allowing for developmentally appropriate separation. Possibly because of her ability to see that period of time as a multisided phenomenon, including acknowledging her own fears, Lena almost did not have to resort to her usual way of compartmentalizing and externalizing negativity onto another object, as was the case in almost every other anxiety provoking situation. It appeared that she allowed the separation process to happen, and they had enough room to create their own models of functioning. Speaking without reservations about her worries and fears, she managed to construct a congruent picture of a mother who was able to relinquish gradually, but surely, her authority and control, and was able to be fully engaged in her adult son's life from a somewhat peripheral, advisory position. Interestingly enough, the only difference Lena was able to notice in herself, along the lines of her children's growing, concerned her physical changes and the aging process; all other areas of her personality, including her interests, roles, etc., appeared to be static.

The only area standing apart from a general responsive and flexible approach in Lena's parenting style appeared to be where her ability to parent was affected by the

trauma of her immigration experience. For example, a former high-school math teacher, she felt unequipped to help her son with his second-grade math because “they teach it differently here, and I didn’t want to screw him up in this regard.” It appeared very strongly in this and other similar incidents that her sense of incompetence as an immigrant overshadowed certain aspects of parenting, undermining Lena’s ability to help her children to negotiate some of their transitions.

However, it should be noted that her general approach to the letting go of her children was to respond flexibly to their developments and to create an atmosphere in which both parties were able to appreciate the benefits of bringing the relationships to new levels. The similarity of the two above-mentioned spheres of professional and parenting dynamics in terms of Lena’s ability to integrate and navigate varied developments could be based in the presence of an object – children or an objectified internal state - her professional inclinations. Those concrete and relatively palpable objects grounded this participant, allowing her to notice and respond appropriately to the changes in objects. There was a sense of non-existence of a *process* of separation from her country of origin, a rather abrupt cut-off that never became integrated into her sense of who she was in the new country. If anything, that cut-off only deepened and became more extreme with time, freezing all possible developments toward integration and acceptance of the new reality.

## **Chapter V: Discussion**

### **Do we let go?**

Even though this study was not designed to be longitudinal in any sense, I could not help but notice, over the last several years, changes in my understanding of what parenthood entails. It was the growth - emotional, cognitive, and physical maturation of my children, that forced me to reconsider what they could and could not do on their own. It was utter exhaustion on my part, as well as parental pride, that allowed me to be happy, while resigning some of my parental powers. And it is a “Jewish mother” within myself, as one of the participants, Anna, put it, that I still have to battle every time my ten-year old goes to the store down the block on his own.

As to immigration, the whole experience became complicated by recent losses in my family, as well as happy additions to it. The layers and layers of meaning became shaken while I lived through losing a parent, whom I left when I emigrated. As I grappled with feeling fatherless, I also found a new strength in my ability to share that feeling with my family overseas. Knowing it is considered impolite and uncustomary to talk about death in my country of origin, I could not help but notice how naturally it felt for me to talk about my father to my family, and how relieved all of us were to be able to share that excruciating pain. It never would have occurred to me to be so open with my family, had I not spent the last eight years in a country with a culture generally more accepting of the experience of illness and death.

The theme of change through such major life transitions as immigration and parenthood, and the theme of letting go, with loss and mourning intrinsic to it, appear to be naturally connected in my concept of the world. Therefore, at the beginning, I was

struck by the first participant, Tanya's, narrative, in which the themes of loss and change were virtually absent, yet she presented as a well-adjusted, high-functioning, and happy individual. My bias of connecting immigration and children's individuation to feeling of loss, could be seen as naïve, if only it were not supported by such widely recognized literature resources as Akhtar (1995), Grinberg & Grinberg (1989), Volkan (1993), and Yaglom (1993), where mourning was postulated as part of the immigration experience. I put forward an idea of the letting go process that combines the process of the mourning with the result of the mourning, as well as its function in the immigration journey. The letting go process encompasses two major components. Relinquishing an object or some aspects of the object of attachment is one component of this process. The second aspect of it is the acquisition of new sets of objects, including human and non-human environments, as well as social roles and professional identifications. Both aspects go alongside and not necessarily in any particular order. However, as I mentioned before, not every participant of my study exhibited phenomena in their narratives that could be described in terms of the mourning or letting go processes.

Generally speaking, even participants who clearly depicted their experience through relinquishing some aspects of important objects, did not describe such extreme reactions of paranoid fears, paralyzing guilt, or inexplicable hatred, as were found by Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) in their work on immigration. These authors found the above-mentioned reactions to be a common occurrence in immigrants during initial stages of immigration and, often, long afterwards. As expected, such strong, negatively loaded feelings concerning an immigrant's experience of an old and/or a new country undermines one's ability for relinquishing an old object and taking in a new one.

Some traces of guilt and anger aimed at the generalized object (new country and country of origin) were observed, e.g., Tanya and Samuel's remarks about the FSU's persecutory tendencies; or Dmitry's discontent with the American medical rehabilitation system. Those tendencies may represent, in Kleinian terms, residue of an earlier developmental stage of object relation; but they never reached the intensity of the full-fledged paranoid-schizoid position, the position Grinberg and Grinberg described to be very common among immigrants during their first several years in a new country.

This discrepancy in findings could be multi-determined, but the most important causal links appeared to be in the choice of the sample of participants for this study. In comparison to the clinical population portrayed in the work of the above-mentioned authors, the participants in this study belonged to a non-clinical population (reportedly and according to the researcher's observation not carrying explicit psychiatric diagnoses) of high-functioning adults, thus their reactions were expected to be milder and more adaptive. Also, they were interviewed not at their initial stage of immigration, which may account for some retrospective leveling of intense emotions. When describing the changes, the participants were more conscious of new acquisitions, rather than losses. Yet again, this trend could be partially determined by their advanced and more stable stage of immigration. In addition, the general tendency of concentrating on what is acquired, rather than on what was lost, might be a prerequisite of a good adjustment. Concentration on gains, rather than losses, held true even for Samuel, who subjectively, still feels very much out of place, because of a lack of professional adjustment.

### **People who held on**

Because it is such a common occurrence in the literature to connect immigration to mourning, and, in my interpretation, to the letting go process, participants who did not go through this process caught my attention early on in this research. Participants of this study who did not let go and did not mourn per se, appeared to exhibit more concreteness and rigidity in the way they dealt with their objects of attachment, as well as in their reflective functioning. Uri, for example, when asked about his relationships with both countries, spoke at length about being torn between his responsibility to his immediate family in New York, and his sister and her family back in the FSU. Never during that conversation was Uri able to bring it to a more abstract level, or to have the slightest inkling as to what his family conflict might represent or stand for.

The other three participants, who either internally held on to the most important parts of the old reality, or managed to create a transitional space that possessed some components of the new and the old realities in a rigid form, had similar patterns of concreteness and inflexibility in their attempts to analyze the relationships with their country of origin and the US. With that said, these participants were no less functional and well adjusted, compared to the participants fully involved in the letting go process. Three out of four participants were congruent in defining their level of comfort in the US as very high, and supporting this point with direct and indirect evidence. One can argue that for individuals like Lena, Mikhail, Uri, and, to an extent, Tanya, who exhibit certain difficulties in reflective functioning, the feeling of subjective comfort may be more easily attainable, compared to individuals with more sophisticated reflective functioning and a higher level of demands. The above-mentioned four participants

might be representative of a larger cluster of the population that has fewer and less differentiated categories against which to compare and judge their state of subjective being. Nevertheless, the subjective feeling of comfort and success in the immigration process and beyond it, serves as such a crucial element for adult development, that many authors, such as Pine (1982), Volkan (1993), Young & Bagley (1982), suggested it as a prerequisite of the positive development of the self and the relational realm.

Colarusso's (1990) concept of parenting, as a component of the third individuation, has as a cornerstone the notion of reciprocal development of the parent and the child. Development implies creating new object ties, and, consequently, letting go of old ones to a certain extent. My own theoretical musings about the nature of parent-child relationships is based on the notion of loosening the primary ties, which can be reminiscent of relinquishing the primary ties to one's parent. Therefore this process is bound to include the work of mourning and accepting relationships on new levels with one's children.

Again, not every participant's parenting experience could be described in such terms. Tanya and Mikhail used different mechanisms of adjusting to their children's growth, e.g., Tanya accepted her daughter's physical maturation and ignored other aspects of her growth, while externalizing anxiety and tension around latency and adolescent transitions. Mikhail was able to relate to his children only on a non-symbolic level of physical connection, and felt rejected by them as soon as they were beyond the stage of direct physical dependency on him, which led to his unquenchable desire to have more children. There were other participants, who either were involved in the relinquishing process with one child and not with the other (Uri), or employed and then

abandoned the letting go process at certain stages of their children's development (Dmitry, Anna, and Inga). Even though two of these participants (Tanya and Uri) claimed and supplied evidence for relatively positive parent-child relationships, lacking any gross dysfunctions from a parental perspective, they also gave a lot of direct and indirect evidence of major separation-individuation problems their children exhibited, including the inability to make independent decisions and set their own goals. Mikhail depicted his relationships with his four children as conflicted and distant, and himself, as increasingly lonely around them. Inga considered her inability to allow her son to be his own person during his latency period, as a factor that affected the boy's self-concept negatively, while Dmitry recalled his daughters' latency period and his severe clashes with them around expressing their opinions at that period of time, as the last straw that had pushed him out of the family.

Anna's situation differed in regards to the age of her son, when she, overwhelmed by the challenges his young adult transition presented, changed her generally accepting and fluid parenting style to a more controlling and mistrusting one. Possibly, because it occurred relatively late in their relationship, that change did not appear to have any significant consequences for the boy's development along the separation-individuation path. His mother's account of him included multiple descriptions of him as an independent thinker and a mature individual. Those descriptions were congruent with Anna's more factual account of the day-to-day life in her family, which included decision-making process largely initiated by her son, as well as multiple occasions when he took complete responsibility for initiating, planning, and carrying out serious projects (e.g., choosing and getting into a prestigious college on his own, etc). Even

though the change in Anna's parenting style appeared not to affect significantly the trajectory of her son's development or the quality of their relationship, it influenced her emotional well-being, which was affected negatively.

With an understanding that this qualitative exploratory study can only offer directions for future, more measures-oriented research, an important tendency was formulated on a basis of the above-mentioned phenomenological descriptions and observations. When the object of separation is one's national identity as it is in the case of the immigration process, it is possible to build a relationship to this object in a relatively static manner without jeopardizing crucial aspects of one's adult development. However, when the object of separation is human, e.g., one's children, the absence of the letting go process determines significant difficulties in the relationships that undermines both the parent-child relationships, and the child's outlook for satisfactory independent functioning.

### **Why it is useful that "self-concept" has "concept" in it**

Even though the question of how change occurs is hardly a new one for the field of psychology, such well-described human experiences in the literature as immigration and parenthood, appeared to be studied from a perspective of "what happens when something goes wrong?" Now, being myself a mother of three and an immigrant, only God knows why I decided to study what happens when nothing appears to go really wrong, or, if formulated in a scientific manner, the particularities of the letting go processes during the major life transitions of immigration and parenthood in a non-

clinical sample of the population. My major focus of attention was on the process of change during those transitions, specifically:

1. How do people describe these changes when reminiscing;
2. How do these changes occur;
3. What allows us to change?

My assumption, based, both on personal and clinical experience, was formulated as follows: the letting go process during these transitions is intrinsically connected to changes in self-concept of an individual involved in those transitions. A necessity to adjust to the rapidly changing situation during major life transitions may trigger particular changes in self-concept, which allow for the letting go process to take place.

In the literature review section, I presented the history of the term self-concept in the field of psychology, several theoretical points of view on the formation and transformation of it, as well as a number of existing assumptions in the literature about the sources of information concerning existing qualities and transformations of self-concept in individuals. In this discussion section I would like to present my point of view on the above phenomena that was refined by both, a deeper analysis of relevant literature and close encounters with the narratives of the participants of this study.

In order to be able to talk more specifically about self-concept, it is useful to step outside of the field of psychology and briefly re-create a context in which the act of conceptualization has been understood in science. If one takes into account such qualities of human nature as curiosity, especially curiosity about his/her own functioning, it should not come as a surprise that the first known formal attempts to understand the process of ascribing meaning to and categorizing the outside world of objects and events dates back to antiquity (Plato, in Margolis & Laurence, 1999). Those attempts produced what later became known as the classical theory of concept, in which concept was generally defined

through a set of other concepts that possess necessary qualities, preferably sensory or perceptual, for application of this concept. The process of concept acquisition, categorization, and its circle of reference, are all rooted in the definitional structure of the concept. To reiterate the same thought in more simplistic terms, a concept consists of its elements, is defined by them and dependent on them in terms of its usage. Another important assumption in the classical theory of concept states that concepts were postulated to be stable and unambiguous, so that,

...Once a person has a concept, then, except for early developmental changes... that person will always have the same set of properties in mind. A concept is stable across individuals to the extent that when any two people have the same concept they have the identical sets of properties in mind. (Smith & Medin (1981) in Rey, 1999)

These two postulates of definitional structure and stability of the concept appear to serve as common ground for many authors within a classical theory of concepts. For the reason that there were a substantial number of influential authors on the subject of concepts whose views, with variations, had fallen under an umbrella of classical theory, it is customary by now to refer to this cohort of theories as a family of classical theories. Their theorizing had offered many fruitful paths for illuminating causal links between concepts and elements, especially useful in creating baseline reasoning for some aspects of 'hard' science. The family of classical theories describes the process of acquisition and development of concepts so convincingly, that their views had dominated the field of philosophy and social science, including psychology, until the late 1950's.

Together with the quest for an analytical understanding of the process of categorization and human reasoning, in human kind coexisted a no less powerful quest for coherence and meaning of an individual's, in a broad sense, 'story'. An enormous

amount of knowledge about human nature and relationships with each other and an outside world has been accumulated and preserved in a narrative form (Estes, 2003). Myth, legends, and fairy tales, as one of the oldest exemplars of human creativity, all have in common a strong pursuit of continuity within generations and cultures. We need to know that multitudes of generations before us and across the world had had our maladies and had recovered, had fallen and rose again. This quest for coherency appears to have its reflections in both, phylogenetic and ontogenetic levels, urging us not only to try on stories created by others, but also to create a story of our own personality and development. Even if our story is no less about others than it is about us, our self-concept serves as a backbone for this story and a sense-making instrument, holding it together and insuring its coherence.

The term “self-concept” presents a challenge in some regards if one tries to define it through the paradigm of classical theory. According to the classical theory, there supposed to be a strong and unidirectional dependency of the concept on its elements, when the elements define the concept. Even though self-concept can be viewed as a combination of sub concepts, or a combination of separate beliefs about the qualities of one’s personality, it has a distinctive role of serving as a meta-position towards the individual’s own cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal functioning, insuring a sense of cohesiveness and integrity of one’s personality. The role of instrument for reflection, ability to be in a meta-position towards one’s functioning, and the function of creating a sense of coherency, are all affected by the elements of the self-concept. Those separate intellectual and emotional qualities and abilities, and beliefs about them, together serve as

a mean for the above-mentioned roles and functions. For example, Mikhail was very conscious about his lack of interest in being anything else but a musician, thus defining himself as a “man of one love.” He also defined many of his emotional states and attitudes as strong and unambiguous. Consequently, Mikhail’s sense of self-coherency and integrity throughout the years was reportedly very prominent and unchallenged, while his ability to reflect on his emotional states did not strike us as his strong quality.

In addition to the self-concept being affected by its sub concepts, it also reciprocally affects them, the relationships that are hard to anticipate if we were to look at the self-concept strictly through the lenses of classical theory. An empirically known and well-documented notion of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1959), as a feeling of discomfort an individual may experience when facing the discrepancy between earlier knowledge or beliefs and new acquisitions, appeared to have its influence in the impact self-concept has on its sub concepts. Self-concept is a relatively ‘large’ and complicated psychological structure in a sense that it touches upon and depends on many layers of character structure, including developmental trajectory, interpersonal realm, and defensive organization. Therefore, when a separate belief tends to contradict the whole picture of how an individual understands himself/herself, of course, a chance exists that this particular belief will change the self-concept. However, the chance appears to be much greater that this separate sub concept will be modified to fit an individual’s story about himself. Interestingly enough, this assumption was confirmed by multiple examples from the participants’ narratives, in which they spoke about both, an old self-concept powerfully influencing new bits of information about one’s

personality, and a modified self-concept strongly affecting those beliefs about the self that did not fit a new picture.

As an example of an old self-concept affecting new knowledge about one's self may serve Mikhail's statement that he is incapable of learning a new language, which goes along with his role, as he sees it, of a "keeper of traditions" in his family. In spite of his constant attempts to read periodicals and to watch movies in English, in spite of his apparently increased ease in communicating with others in English, he still perceives himself as incapable in that realm. To further sabotage his attempts in this area, Mikhail keeps re-reading the same material in English grammar textbooks, and often abandons all efforts completely, a discouraging and ineffective technique when it comes to foreign language acquisition. This, however, keeps his conceptualizing about himself solid and inflexible, and his anxiety at bay.

An example of how a modified self-concept may affect a pre-existing belief may be found in Inga's narrative. She described herself in her early twenties as that perfect in everybody else's opinion mother and wife, and as utterly unattractive, in her own eyes, woman. Over the years and multitude of life transitions, her self-concept had undergone many changes, mostly in the area of her beliefs about self-actualization, in Inga's understanding of hierarchy of her values, and in her understanding of the power structure within her immediate family. She did not report on any conscious work that has been done over the years in the area of changing her self-esteem regarding her physical appearance. Inga, however, now tends to mention her looks in a much more positive manner, as she recounts her close friend's statement about how attractive Inga is and how she should spend time and money on herself. Inga marvels on how receptive

she became to those kinds of remarks now, and how she would have rejected them some years ago. The influence of modified self-concept appears to be crucial in this example.

Together with the definitional structure of the concept restricting reciprocal relationship between the concept and its elements, additional difficulty arises when one attempts to understand the development of the self-concept through the lenses of classical theory because of the emphasis it places on the stability of the concept once it is past the initial formation stage. According to the literature that reflects on adult development (Akhtar, 1995; Benedek, 1959; Modell, 1965; Pine, 1982), almost all aspects of ego functioning continue to expand and differentiate throughout the adult years, although at a different pace and according to different rules, compared to childhood ego development. Self-concept also goes on to develop and differentiate, both as a reflection of ego development and as a process of constant learning about aspects and qualities of one's self. It appears that the classical view on concept does not leave enough room for the continuous development of such a phenomenon as self-concept. Therefore, a model that provides a different understanding of the concepts comes in handy when speculating about the development and properties of self-concept.

Theory-theory model, according to Carey (1991), holds a view on concepts as building blocks of theories, or beliefs. Concepts are defined through the roles they play in those theories that are more complicated explanatory structures representing particular domains. Theory-theory model describes individuals' theories as changing on different levels, including the change of the substance of the theory (e.g., a two-year old view on gender differences vs. an adult view on the same issue), or further differentiation and expansion (a path for understanding the theory of relativity from the

seventh-grade teacher's concrete explanation, to teaching it to grad students thirty years later). Concepts, as constituents of theories, change as well, being pulled and shuffled by those theories, which encompasses reciprocal development of the self-concept and its components.

After encountering the narratives of the participants of this study, in which the role of self-concept was, at times, more prominent or subtler, I think that theory-theory model allows for the most fruitful, yet smooth, link between concept and self-concept phenomena. If concepts are constituents of beliefs, then knowledge accumulated in varied concepts about one's self ("I am kind," "I am usually unlucky," "I am good in soccer") forms a relatively coherent and continuous system of beliefs about one's self, namely self-concept. Of course, this system of beliefs is not formed in a vacuum, but in the tapestry of an individual's narrative, which includes relationships with others and with one's own past, as well as projections into the future. In addition, looking onto self-concept through the lenses of theory-theory model helped me to articulate the difference between what felt like "levels" of self-concept in different participants.

Even though this study has not been designed to look specifically into this issue, the by-product of asking people to reflect on the process of internal change during their life transitions was my noting their different propensities and abilities to convey aspects of their self-concepts. Without exception, every one of the participants had a set of beliefs about himself/herself. They did differ in the way those sets of beliefs transpired in the interview process. For example, Mikhail, Inga, Dmitry, and Anna, all had more or less elaborated theories about their own character, its formation and transformation, or

lack of it. Those participants spontaneously offered not only the descriptions of their personalities, but also their reasoning about causal links within it. With the rest of the participants, their set of beliefs and sense of cohesiveness of their personalities came into the picture only when challenged by a conflict, or some events that could have, or had had, ego-dystonic ramifications.

Interestingly enough, a high level of reflective functioning (Fonagy, 1991) did not always determine the presence of a more elaborate self-concept. For example, Mikhail's difficulties in reflective functioning were very apparent from his account of the quality of his interpersonal relationships, and his generally poor insights into his feelings and emotional states. At the same time, it did not prevent him from having an elaborate theory about his personality, and how a certain set of roles did or did not fit his personal qualities and inspirations. In addition, Mikhail has made constant efforts, quite consciously, to maintain a sense of self-coherency through taking on the role of the "keeper of traditions" within his family, and also getting confirmations from his referential group that he "had not changed." In the results section, I offered my understanding as to why it was so vitally important for this participant to keep his self-concept rigidly unchanged. Here I want to make a different point in noting the level of conscious elaboration of his set of beliefs about the self, as well as his spontaneity in offering his thoughts on causal links within his personality. If all of the above is seen through the lenses of theory-theory view on concepts, it amounts to having a theory of the self, for which I offer a term "explicit self-concept."

If we look into the narrative of another participant, Samuel, it becomes obvious that his level of reflective functioning, as well as his ability for symbolization, was generally

very high in all areas of his life. At the same time, the presence of self-concept in this participant during the interview process was expressed only when he encountered a discord between his beliefs about the self and what the existing reality had to offer him, or when he noted a change in his self-concept that was determined by his adjustment to new situations. Samuel, for example, mentioned his belief about his low level of tolerance for ambiguity only in connection to the moment he decided to emigrate from Russia during the political coup in Moscow in 1991. He discovered that the political regime there determined the level of economic and social instability far exceeding his own tolerance for ambiguity concerning his family's future. Another character feature, specifically him being "not an outgoing person" was brought up in connection to a necessity to form new alliances, including professional and social ones, in the new country. In addition, Samuel when describing his changed qualities as a response to new circumstances, mentioned a few beliefs about himself, e.g., his diminished interest in Russia's political ordeals and him growing emotionally distant from his city of origin.

There are many theory-theorists who agree that a crucial aspect of any theory, that distinguishes the theory from its elements, is the question of whether it is used for explanatory purposes. (Laurence & Margolis, 1999) I suggest that the same criteria should be used when deciding on the level of the self-concept. If an individual uses his/her set of beliefs about the self to explain the casual links within his personality, as well as his relationship to the outside world, this set of beliefs about the self forms an explicit self-concept. The set of beliefs about one's personal qualities and propensities, that comes to light mostly as a response to challenging conditions and situations, constitutes an implicit self-concept.

I presented Mikhail and Samuel's accounts of their self-concept to emphasize that even though common sense tells us that people with a higher level of reflective functioning would be more prone to have explicit self-concept, in this study, it has not always been the case. Out of four participants with multileveled and elaborate theories about selves, one had significant difficulties in reflective functioning. Out of six participants with implicit self-concepts, two had well-developed abilities for reflective functioning. Therefore, merely a tendency was noted for some level of correlation between reflective functioning and a type of self-concept. Future research is needed to determine a presence or absence of true correlation between these phenomena.

### **What does self-concept have to do with immigration or parenthood?**

Since we already had discussed participants who, while going through immigration and parenthood, stayed virtually the same, it is about time we discuss in more detail participants who either embraced change during these life transitions, or were not able to avoid it. All six participants who adjusted to a new reality as immigrants and as parents of a growing and separating child (children) by means of going through the letting go processes, also exhibited significant changes in their self-concepts. There was no exception to this rule, including participants whose general trend was to let go of an object but who had periods of hinder in this process and reverting to more rigid modes of operating.

In detecting changes in participants' self-concepts, I relied on two sources of information - their direct accounts of changes in their beliefs, and/or any mentioning in

the interview process of changes in likes-dislikes, circles of friends and interests, and alterations in the variability of roles that fitted comfortably. These two sources of information I considered to be relevant because they reflect a dual nature of the self-concept phenomenon. On a one hand, self-concept is dependent upon, so to speak, objectified self-perception. In order to form a self-concept, a set of beliefs about the self, an individual has to perceive himself/herself as an object with certain qualities. One of the important functions of the self-concept that creates a sense of coherency for an individual is that self-concept serves as a meta-position towards one's intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal functioning. This role relies heavily on objectified self-perception (Fenichel, 1937; 1945). The participants' accounts of changes in their belief system appeared to be a legitimate source of information about transformations in their self-concepts.

On the other hand, human capacity for detachment and reflective awareness is limited; therefore the self-concept can never be strictly introspective in its nature. Another important component of the self-concept is a direct awareness of inner experiences (James, 1890; 1979), which brings us to a different set of indicators of changes in the self-concept. As I discussed in more detail in the literature review section, alterations in the self-concept turn into an observable phenomenon when our beliefs become reflected in our object choices in the outside world in large and small ways, including above-mentioned changes in circle of friends, interests, and roles. Even though object choice is an incredibly complicated and multi-layered process, let me touch upon only one aspect of it, which appears to be related in an important way to the subject of this study. In my patients' and the participants' narratives the theme of

something “just feeling right,” or the theme of feeling that something “doesn’t fit any more,” reappeared again and again during the times of transitions. Those themes were usually related to social affiliations and/or professional roles, and they always included an outside object, e.g., a former friend, an interesting class, a movie, that an individual observed himself/herself relating to in a different way. I strongly believe that those outside objects were used as tools for projection, not in a defensive way, of the experience of inner change, serving as a mirror to reflect the self-concept in the transformation process.

With all but one participant, these two sources of information corroborated, confirming the feeling of transformation of self with factual evidence of change in interests and hobbies (Samuel), circle of friends (Anna), and professional expertise (German). In one participant, Dmitry, there was a significant discrepancy between his claims that he stayed exactly the same throughout every hassle of parenthood and immigration, and a lot of direct and indirect evidence on changing steadily while going through both transitions. This discrepancy originated in his tendency to be relatively open to the demands of reality, combined with his lack of self-differentiation, which threatened and undermined his sense of self-cohesiveness, if he would not only change, but also acknowledge that change on a conscious level.

Varied transformations of the self-concept were noted to be a necessary component of the letting go process. Not only the presence of change, but also the source of change is important when considering the normative process of letting go, as well as the therapeutic implications for difficulties in the letting go of an object. The question of

what had caused the change, or, at least, the participants' conscious take on it, provides us with interesting information on the issue of the source of change. Two possible opposite trends might be that the change is required by a new society and by "others" in it, or the feeling that "I needed to change in order to stay true to myself and to actualize myself," as Inga put it. These two trends represent a dispute between symbolic interactionism and phenomenological approach; a dispute about the determinants of change in individuals, mentioned in the literature review section. This particular question points to a direction for future theoretical and experiential explorations concerning the development of self-concept through adulthood.

In this research, it showed that the majority of participants felt they had changed as a result of acquiring something that became "available" for them in a new country (Inga, Samuel, Dmitry, Anna), which felt ego-syntonic (e.g., more humane approach to developmental disability was not only readily accepted by Inga in her professional studies and work, but she also extrapolated it onto her personal shortcomings thus becoming more accepting and less anxious). Another frequently mentioned theme was that the participants *had* to change in order to achieve *their* goals in a new environment (Anna, German, Gala); or a combination of both. "Others" or other individuals, members of "a referential group" (Gordon & Gergen, 1968), as a source of judgment, were mentioned only by two participants (Gala and Mikhail) in the context of registering change, or lack of it. Both participants had pronounced difficulties in reflective functioning, and needed others to mirror and confirm their feelings and the particularities of their ego developments. It appeared that individual meaning, rather than a "generalized other," became the source of change for the participants of this

study. This, of course, does not take away from the importance of social rules, traditions, and regulations, which, through the care-giving figures, shape self-concept at an individual's earlier developmental stages.

Participants fully involved in the letting go process, especially during their initial transition into parenthood, reported changes to their core self, changes essential and permanent, even though they occurred over a short period of time. "I became utterly responsible for someone else and very invested in someone else. It shifted my core; from then on, I was *for someone*, and not only for myself." In those words, Dmitry described his state of being a few months after his twin daughters were born. Other participants also described registering changes on some essential level, rather than reflecting on isolated modifications of, for example, roles or points of views. This observation was in-sync with Theory-Theory model's view (Carey, 1991) on psychological essentialism as a mechanism of concept change. Rather than going over a checklist of properties in order to register change in concept, which was postulated to be the case by the Classical Theory of concepts, people have a tendency to access an entire theory in order to make a decision about concepts. This was especially true for participants with explicit self-concepts; for they usually spoke about transformations that had implications for their sense of self. Only occasionally a few participants have mentioned certain changes of isolated personal qualities, roles, and expectations, without making a connection to transformation on a more essential level.

In order to have a more complete description of self-concept phenomena, we need to pay attention to the psychological mechanisms that allow for the restructuring of the

self-concept. I attempted to approach this question in the literature review section from a theoretical point of view. To sum up what was said before, during major life transitions, transformations on a level of identity may take place, which then become reflected in the transformations of the self-concept. I utilized Kernberg's theoretical considerations on formation of ego identity to detect possible transformations of it in the participants. I also put forward an idea, extrapolated from developmental studies, that reverting to an earlier developmental stage would precede every significant transformation. Kernberg (1966) suggests the existence of the three levels of internalization of object relations – introjection, identification, and ego identity; with introjection based on perception and memory, identification based on the ability to recognize the socially assigned roles of the object of identification, and ego identity comprised of the presence of a sense of continuity of the self, a sense of consistency between the concept of the self and the external representational world, and a sense of “confirmation” of one's identity derived from interactions with the environment. I predicted a heightening identification tendency in transitional times, which was fully confirmed by my pilot interview with the first participant, Tanya. She exhibited both positive and negative identifications during her initial transitions into parenthood and immigration. She appeared to be taking in, or rejecting, individuals and whole families, idealizing them, identifying with them, or devaluing them, in an indiscriminate way, which was uncharacteristic of her at different times. She took on and took in a role of the mother, describing love at first sight, not uncommon among other participants, which then, with time and numerous confirmations, became ego identity.

At first, Tanya's narrative appeared to fit perfectly into my schema of regressing on the level of identification, before a new jump in ego development, and, as a result, self-concept transformation. Except, there was no evidence in her narrative for any significant self-concept transformation that took place in this participant. In spite of all the work involved, I was happy that I did not design this study to be a single case study, when I have found the missing element for self-concept transformation in the narratives of the other participants.

Many of the participants exhibited what can be described as heightening identification trends during a multitude of transitions throughout immigration and parenthood. For example, Samuel provided us with a great illustration of negative identification, when describing people he felt he was surrounded by during his first months of immigration.

Everybody's inclination here is to give advice and to withhold information. It was obnoxious. ...I hated it. ...Many of them felt that if they came here earlier, they were smarter and older. They said, you should do this and that. (P.29)

He then proceeded to tell me how he had sworn he would never become like them. The expression of such strong and unequivocal feelings was highly uncharacteristic of this participant. Rejection or acceptance, without analysis, often times with strong feelings involved, were all signs of Samuel's heightening identification trend. Another participant, Gala, even exhibited an ability to reflect on her propensity for identification during immigration and parenthood. "We were one, when he coughed, I coughed," described Gala about her identification with her little son and with what she felt, was a role of a real mother. She also recalled her readiness during the first immigration steps "to become whatever, whoever," which is often the case in identification, where the role

is taken in with an understanding of social implications but without detailed deliberation of the content of that role.

It appeared that these and other participants provided examples of the same phenomenon of regressing to a developmentally lower stage of ego development, which could be a precursor of a transformation of self-concept. However, only those participants who demonstrated an awareness of that regression, not necessarily as a regression, but as an alteration of their usual level of functioning, or perceptions, or repertoire of roles, only they later on provided evidence for self-concept transformation and the letting go process.

Therefore, the following important conclusion was formulated on the basis of this observation. Shifts in the levels of identity formation do not necessarily imply changes in self-concept, only a window of opportunity for transformation, if there is no awareness of changes in personality, beliefs, set of roles, or expectations. This observation held true for all the participants of this study, and can be extrapolated to other high-functioning adults. This inference underscores the importance of the conscious act of conceptualizing as a necessary part of self-concept. Without this conscious awareness of change either on the level of personality, or on the behavioral level, participants factually stayed the same. This conclusion has clinical implication both for prognostic and therapy purposes, when attempting to map the difficulties in the letting go process of an object, or facilitating this process in a therapeutic environment.

There were a few trends, related to transformation of self-concept, that the majority of the participants exhibited only during their immigration transitions. These trends might be of interest in light of clinical considerations when working with an

immigrant population, especially during initial, generally more acute, stages. During the interview process, there was a segment of questions related to the period of time when the decision to emigrate was made and finalized. Virtually all participants described a period of changed perception that began around that time. Some of them started to negate the goodness of the old object, getting angry with and rejecting either people, or the governmental system, or grimy streets. Some of the participants took pleasure in positive changes within themselves. For example, Gala felt so assertive, that she not only threw a beet at a saleswoman who was exceptionally rude towards her, but also enjoyed that act immensely. All of the above signifies that the start of transformations related to immigration, with mourning and/or rapid utilization of all available defenses intrinsic to it, begins before, sometimes well before, an immigrant sets a foot on a new land.

Another interesting, although quite expected tendency was related to the period of time right after relocation to another country. It appeared that the majority of the participants experienced significant simplification of their self-concepts at that point. They measured themselves along fewer dimensions (e.g., Dmitry identified himself only as a bread-winner and a student, instead of multitudes of personal and professional roles right before immigration); they tend to concentrate only on relationship with one country at a time (e.g., Inga pushed away every possible reminder of her country of origin up until a point few years into immigration, while Lena was lost in reminiscing about goodness of Russia). Even participants who were very capable of reflecting on all the dimensions of their complex set of beliefs about themselves, demonstrated significant flattening of their self-concepts. It appeared that this simplification had a defensive function that prevented the new immigrants from being overwhelmed by their own

reflective functioning, which could have made the pain of uprooting more intense by concentrating on it, while contemplating or being actively involved in the process of change. Later on, with the first step of the immigration journey behind them those participants who were capable of multidimensional self-concept regained it.

Both the above-described particularities of changes in self-concept during immigration have direct implications for clinical work with immigrants, concerning the question as to when the normative work of mourning may, or should, start if there is nothing impeding it. The second point touches upon a complicated question of clinical work with individuals in an intense stage of initial adjustment to a new country. If individuals' ability to be in a meta-position towards their own functioning is temporarily diminished for the sake of preventing the overburdening the defensive organization, and it appears to be a quest for health, rather than a rigid mechanism preventing further development; then the question of the choice of the mode of therapy arises. If the insight-oriented therapy should still be the treatment of choice, then the focus of therapeutic work ought to involve the areas least dependent on the patients' current quality of reflective functioning toward their ego organization and defensive structure.

### **Same dance, different staging?**

One of the main questions for this research originated in my clinical work with immigrants who also happened to be parents, and it was formulated as follows: is there a letting go style that an individual applies to different instances of relinquishing an object, regardless of the properties of an object? In the case of getting a positive answer to this question, the implications for the therapy process could be very significant because it would allow a therapist to conceptualize the specific difficulties of a patient, who is

feeling stuck in certain relationships, or who exhibits counter phobic abrupt separation from an object, as difficulties in separation from an object per se, thus creating a short-cut to the core of the issue.

The results section was devoted to summing up the detailed analysis of the participants' narratives along the lines of whether they let go, or did not let go, of their children and their countries, and what kind of psychological mechanisms they utilized during this process. For the purpose of clarifying the question about the existence of individual letting go styles, I divided all participants into three groups on a basis of similarities, or lack of thereof, in the process of letting go during two major life transitions. In the first group, that consisted of five participants (Tanya, Samuel, Gala, German, and Mikhail), individuals exhibited strong similarities throughout transitions of immigration and parenthood in relating to their objects of attachment, either human or non-human. (De Vryer's, 1989). In the second group that consisted of three participants (Anna, Inga, and Dmitry), all individuals demonstrated similarities in their letting go styles across two transitions, but they also exhibited significant alterations of their letting go of the objects depending on the level of conflicted relationships with the objects. In the third group (Lena and Uri), both participants demonstrated significant discrepancies in their letting go styles that were determined by the particularities of their object relations and the way those particularities found their reflection in the participants' relationships with the objects of attachment.

Each of the five participants from the first group had his or her unique way of structuring reality around their separating children, and each of them represented a

unique approach to finding his/her position towards the old and the new countries. However, all five participants exhibited similar defenses and utilized similar descriptions and coping strategies when dealing with both transitions. For instance, Samuel's tendency to relate to an object of attachment through a medium of a third party significantly colored both his relationships with his son and with his old and new countries. Gala's specific difficulties in reflective functioning predetermined very abrupt separations from her children and from her country of origin, which then was followed by more reserved and considered developments in that regard. Mikhail designed his life path according to what he felt was his role of a tradition-keeper, which, in combination with his difficulty in relating to an object on a symbolic level, shaped his letting go style, or lack of it, during both transitions. In the result section, I gave a detailed description of the major tendencies all five participants from the first group exhibited during immigration and parenthood transitions. In this section, I would like to briefly compare two seemingly very different participants, in terms of their ability to either let go or hold on to an object of attachments. For example, Tanya constructed her role as a mother of a growing daughter, and her role as an immigrant, through the means of an over inclusive role of caretaker, a caretaker with the main mission to keep her objects of attachment unchanged. She went through a sequence of steps, with each of them becoming more needed by her family and her clients at work. This defensive mechanism, or should I say the main theme of her personality organization, because it was anything but limited to a specific area, allowed her to feel comfortable and to adjust to a changing situation, without an internal change.

Another participant, German, with similar mechanisms of relinquishing his country of origin and his separating children, noted that he did not experience that internal joy that goes along with the changes in some people, but he complied with the demands of reality that required him to transform and accept the new dimensions of old roles. He enjoyed and recalled fondly the antics of his children, when they were very little. But he, as opposed to Tanya, also allowed his children to mature emotionally and separate from him, accepting with great surprise and pleasure that they, during their adolescent years still ask for occasional advice. German's immigration plans included securing legal immigration status for his family and himself, and going back to his country of origin. He, however, re-accessed the situation relatively soon after arrival, observing his family's earnest attempts for adjustment and realizing that it would not be possible for him to exercise his plans without sacrificing theirs. This change of the game plan affected his perception of the new country, which was quite negative at first. German's ability to register change in external reality and then to adjust and change his internal reality to accommodate it, was quite remarkable and held true throughout both transitions.

All five participants from the first group demonstrated remarkable parallels in their descriptions of the levels of preservation vs. change in their self-concepts throughout both transitions. That was not the case in the second group of participants, that consisted of three individuals, each of them demonstrating strong similarities in their letting go styles during transitional experiences, except for a clearly defined period of time that was characterized by significant conflicts in relation to one or both objects. All

three participants in this group were ultimately involved in the letting go process of their countries of origin and their individuating children, so that when their letting go style had changed, it changed from being able to relinquish an object to needing to hold on to it in a rigid form. Each of these participants had a particular vulnerability in their personality structure that was brought into play by certain components of their realities during transitional experiences. That development overwhelmed their coping strategies, which determined their usage of more primitive defenses, as well as their becoming more rigidly connected to an object.

In Anna's narrative, her orientation to the future and her "being a Jewish mother," which she defined as perpetual concern for those close to her, created an unbearable internal tension when her son had stumbled during his young adulthood transition. He represented her future, and he made a few decisions that, in her mind, undercut his future prospects, thus chipping away at the sheer foundation of her personality. Anna's guilt became overwhelming; the boundaries between them had melted on her part. Her relationship with her son has not changed over the last several years; neither did her understanding of her role and functions as the mother of an adult son. If anything, she described herself as more rigid and neurotic as she had ever been. In other areas of Anna's life, her self-concept kept changing and developing, creating a discrepancy between her current letting go styles of different objects.

Similarly, Inga described a distinctive period of time when her relationship with her older son took a different turn, compared to her usual flexibility and acceptance. It happened during his latency transition when he first became evaluated by an outside world that was represented by the elementary school teachers. The extent of Inga's

narcissistic insult, when his grades turned out to be less than perfect, is understandable in light of her difficulties in her own separation-individuation process at that time. Those difficulties were determined by Inga's earlier relationships with her powerful but positive mother and her abusive, and then absent, father, as well as a close-knit military community that viewed her role in the family and the community as secondary. Unable to feel enough of her own person at that period of time, Inga had to include her son in her personality structure, which forced her to feel his difficulties not only as her own, but also as a deep narcissistic injury. That period of time in their relationship differed a great deal from Inga's style of letting go of her country, which included accepting her mixed feelings of loss and mourning combined with the joy of new discoveries. Her style of parenting, excluding the above-mentioned period of time, was also characterized by accepting the particularities of their developing relationship, and being able to adjust internally to her changing role as a mother.

Dmitry, the last participant of the second group, exhibited a somewhat convoluted process of letting go of an object, in terms of his ability to exhibit change, but the inability to accept it within himself. He, however, presented with a lot of evidence of being able to adjust to his changing role as a parent, and react with appropriate behavioral and internal transformations to the drastically different reality of the new country. The only period of time when he evidenced a stagnation of his usual development, fell during his daughters' latency transition, when they started to challenge his authority, which was met with a string of harsh repercussions on his part. The issue of authority and power has been a long struggle in his immediate family, his ex-wife and himself coming from very different cultural backgrounds. His patriarchal type of nuclear family denied him any

power, as a child growing up, but promised all the power, once Dmitry was old enough to become the head of his own household. His ex-wife and her parents, all of whom had a very different set of expectations from family life, shattered his unconscious hopes for absolute power in his immediate family. His young daughters' challenging his authority openly and with the full support of their mother, became the last straw that had drove him away from his family. That, however, created a necessary distance, and allowed Dmitry to continue his relationships with his daughters with a renewed power and authority. The shock of marital and family troubles was so overwhelming, that it overburdened his coping strategies and defensive mechanisms, so that his temporary veto on all transformations in all areas of his life determined his rigidity in relation to his country of origin and the new country at that time. When the situation was resolved through divorce, Dmitry regained his ability for relinquishing an object and attaching himself to a new one, or new properties of an old object.

The third group, or the other two participants, exhibited vastly different styles of letting go of objects during the transitions of immigration and parenthood, which, I believe, was determined by the disparity of their object relations. In Lena's narrative, she exhibited difficulties in relating to an object that was not represented in a concrete and palpable way, or was not present in her immediate surroundings. In fact, she used more distant objects to project fears and negative feelings that were initially stirred up by immediate objects, which were never acknowledged. For example, even though this participant did not like her former occupation as a teacher, she enjoyed interactions with the students, it was the parents that caused all the problems. As an immigrant, Lena

criticized every possible general aspect of American reality harshly, but had only warm and kind words for Americans that she actually got to know as co-workers, friends, and customers. Lena demonstrated an inability to relate to an object, represented in a more symbolic way, and it was combined with the fact that immigration was not initiated by her, as she complied with her husband on that issue. It created a situation where her experience of pain and longing for her old country was so intense; she had to completely cut-off all her feelings.

To describe her state of mind during immigration, Lena used a metaphor of a favorite vase that broke, so there was no point in crying over it. However, the presence of concrete and palpable external objects, her children, allowed Lena to respond appropriately to their needs for growth and individuation, adjusting her parenting style on internal and external levels. Interestingly enough, Lena's internal world did not constitute a sufficiently palpable object for her; therefore, her self-concept missed an essential element of reflecting on her own functioning and transformations. The only type of change she was able to notice was the physical change, the aging; every other area of her self-concept was left beyond the scope of her attention and reflective ability. From what I managed to gather through means other than her reflections, Lena's self-concept remained quite rigid over the years of her immigration and parenthood.

A similar tendency held true for Uri, another participant with a very different style of letting go of his children, one child in particular, and his country. In fact, Uri related in a similar manner to his first son and to his country of origin. He experienced significant difficulties in his reflective functioning concerning these two objects. Uri was generally capable of reflecting on his relationships to them only when he managed to find concrete

manifestations of those relationships. For example, the physical maturation of his son became representative of the boy's entire separation-individuation process. Uri's loyalty conflict between his immediate family in the US and his extended family left behind, in his country of origin, stood for his relationships to respective countries. He, however, did not evidence any insight into the nature of those representations and substitutions. His self-concept had a frozen quality to it, with virtually no evidence of transformation on any level. In addition, Uri had a pronounced tendency to concentrate on sensory impressions and intellectual understanding of his reality, bypassing the sphere of emotional states and feelings. This tendency did not promote his ability to relinquish an object in a gradual way. Instead, Uri appeared to take in and evacuate reality in one gulp: he allowed his son to make independent decisions, when he suddenly realized that the boy was fully matured sexually; and within four to five years of living in a new country, Uri realized that his former self-identification as Russian became completely empty for him, "like reading a line from a faceless document," and did not bear any meaning.

Uri's relationship with his daughter took a different path from the very beginning. It appeared that by virtue of him being an initiator in the decision-making process about her birth, and because of the absence of Oedipal issues so prominent with his son, a different relational mechanism was started. He was able to notice and cherish many of her developmental milestones, especially ones concerning her independent strivings, thus providing himself with an opportunity to let go of her previous, more dependent features, and forge a connection to her with every step of her transformations. There were a striking number of similarities between Uri's self-description, and the way he described his son, thus hinting at very strong identification tendencies with the boy. It appeared that

Uri conceptualized his daughter's personal qualities as vastly different from his. To reiterate my thoughts on this participant, expressed in the results section, an opportunity to live an alternative route of his life, vicariously through his daughter, allowed Uri to adjust his parenting style to the changing needs of his growing daughter, even though this change did not expand into other areas of his life.

To sum up what was noted in this sub-section about the existence of individual styles of letting go across different objects and transitions, it can be concluded that the structure of object relations in general prevails over the particularities of concrete relationships with human and non-human objects. There was significant phenomenological evidence for the existence of an individual letting go style that was applied to different objects throughout the transitions of immigration and parenthood.

In the small minority of the participants with vastly different courses of relinquishing and taking in objects of attachment, it is possible to assume that a particular structure of the interviews for this study triggered more anxiety in certain conflicted areas of relationships for these participants, which, in its turn, activated defensive mechanisms shaping their output about one object and not the other. The question then still remains open as to why this semi-structured interview elicited this particular response in these two out of ten participants. Possibly, a larger sample of the population would have illuminated this issue in more details.

However, intentionally maintaining phenomenological description as a goal for this study, it has to be noted, that unevenness, or the "Swiss cheese phenomenon" (Tuber, personal communications, 2002), of the levels and structure of the above-mentioned two

participants' object relations and reflective functioning, was the characteristic that made them different from the rest of the sample. This apparent unevenness in the development of certain crucial aspects of reflective functioning and capacity for symbolization in these two participants far exceeded the level of conflicts and vulnerabilities of the participants in the second group, who, by and large, exhibited similarities in their letting go styles. Significant discrepancies in the way these individuals handled different objects of attachment appeared to be related to developmental struggles that reached a level of developmental arrest (Mahler, Pine, Bergman, 1975), which, at the same time, co-existed with specific areas of ego-strength, or with working compensatory mechanisms that could have determined a different trajectory of relating to different objects.

In cases when particular events or experiences around the issue of relinquishing or taking in new objects tapped directly into the participants' emotional vulnerabilities that did not reach the intensity of the previously described developmental variations in the character organization, it brought about a temporary deviation in the letting go styles. It did not change, however, the general trajectory of the process, whether it was letting go or holding on to an object.

Grinberg & Grinberg (1989) identified several prerequisites for a discriminating integration of two countries, which includes a positive relation to internal objects, as well as accepting losses and working through the mourning process. According to these authors, "the person reorganizes and consolidates his sense of identity as someone who remains himself despite changes and restructuring." The results of this research offer a somewhat different perspective on the same issue – not despite, but due to the

restructuring of the self-concept in combination with remaining true to one's self, the discriminating integration of any new objects into the personality structure is possible.



## Appendix B

### The negotiation of loss during two major life transitions: immigration and parenthood. Consent form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that the purpose of the study is to explore how I experience the process of my children (child) becoming independent individuals. Further, I know the study will focus on different aspects of my immigration experience and my understanding of it.

If I choose to take part, I agree to meet with the interviewer twice for approximately hour and a half each time to discuss my experience of these two major life transitions. I have been informed that I will be reimbursed for childcare expenses for the time I am participating in this study. I understand that my responses to all of the questions will be tape recorded and will remain confidential. On the tapes I will be identified only by a participant identification number. I will not be asked my name, address or phone number during the taping. I agree that I will be willing to be contacted in the future for possible interviews although I am under no obligation to participate. For this purpose after the first interview I will be asked to provide the information on a separate sheet of paper. I understand that this information will be kept separate from the interview tapes.

While I may find the interview interesting and learn something about myself from it, I understand that the purpose of this research is not for my immediate benefit.

I understand that my participation will subject me to minimal possible physical risk or psychological distress, no more than I would encounter in my daily life. Further, I have been informed about the system for insuring my confidentiality and have no concerns regarding that matter.

My participation is voluntary and I understand that I can stop at any time without penalty. I also understand that I am free to choose not to respond to any particular question during the interview. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have any questions or complaints about my rights as a subject, I may call Ethel Breheny, Institutional Review Board Administrator, at 212-650-7903 during office hours. If I have any further questions about the study, I may call Irina Volynsky, MA, at 917-657-8925 or Dr. Jeffrey Rosen, Professor of Psychology at the City College of the City University of New York at 212-650-5694.

I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

Witness:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name



## Appendix C

### Сходство и различие двух переходных этапов в жизни индивидуума: эмиграция и взросление детей

#### Соглашение

ФИО \_\_\_\_\_

Дата \_\_\_\_\_

Я полностью осознаю, что цель данного исследования – изучить мое восприятие и понимание процесса взросления и зарождающейся независимости моего ребенка (детей). Внимание данного научного проекта также будет сконцентрировано на моем опыте эмиграции, включая фактические и психологические компоненты этого процесса.

Если я даю согласие на участие в этом проекте, я обязуюсь встретиться с интервьюером дважды. Каждая встреча может продолжаться около полутора часов.

Я был(а) поставлен(а) в известность, что интервью будет записано на диктофон. Вся информация является строго конфиденциальной. Во время записи мое имя, адрес и номер телефона упомянуты не будут, я буду идентифицирован(а) исключительно по номеру участника. Я даю согласие руководителю проекта на дальнейший контакт со мной относительно возможного участия в последующих интервью, но я никоим образом не обязан(а) в них участвовать. Для целей последующего контакта в конце первого интервью меня попросят дать в письменном виде свое имя, адрес и телефон. Эта информация будет храниться отдельно от кассет с записью интервью.

Я понимаю, что целью данного исследования не является удовлетворение непосредственно моих моральных или материальных нужд, хотя я, возможно, и найду процесс интервью интересным и познавательным.

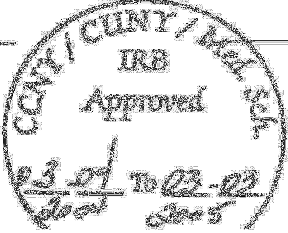
Интервью не будет связано с физическим или психологическим риском. Мое участие является добровольным, и я могу отказаться от него в любой момент. Я также могу отказаться отвечать на любой конкретный вопрос.

Я получил(а) возможность задать любые интересующие меня вопросы. Для получения дальнейшей информации о моих правах участника научного проекта я могу обращаться к Этел Брехени, администратору по научным вопросам, (212) 650-7903. По вопросам, связанным с проектом, я могу обращаться к Ирине Вольнской, MA, (917) 657-8925, или к Джеффри Розену, профессору психологии при Нью-Йоркском университете, (212) 650-5694.

Мне была выдана копия данного документа.

Я согласен(а) принимать участие в проекте.

\_\_\_\_\_ *подпись* \_\_\_\_\_ *ФИО*  
Свидетель \_\_\_\_\_ *Подпись* \_\_\_\_\_ *ФИО*



## Appendix D

### Semi-structured interview

#### Part I: Parental experience of a child's growing independence.

- Describe yourself prior to becoming a parent.
- When you think about parenthood, what comes to mind?
- Describe your current family situation.
- What kind of fantasies about parenthood did you have before you actually became a parent?
- Prior to becoming a parent, when you were just thinking about parenthood, what kind of “side-effects”, sacrifice of what parts of yourself you were expecting from parenthood? After having all these years of experience, which predictions happened to be accurate?
- What would you describe as independence for a child? For your child? For a very young child?
- Why, do you think, kids want to be independent?
- Describe an episode (as early as you can remember) when his/her intentions were clearly different from yours?
- What do you consider being his/her “independent behavior”?
- How does he/she disagree with you?
- How does he/she argue with you or with other family members? (for an older child)
- How do you know that your child is becoming a little more independent?
- Can you distinguish certain stages in the process of your child becoming independent?
- If you could stop or prolong this process, which stage(s) or period(s) you would like to last the longest? The shortest?

- Were there any signs of growth or maturation in your children that were disturbing for you? (Dating, usage of another language, etc)
- A person may experience a wide range of feelings around the same event or fact. Some people feel proud when their kids reach the point when they can do certain things on their own. Some people feel annoyed or left out by the same fact. What do you feel more often and why?
- Thinking back to your childhood and adolescence, what did it mean for you – to be independent (from you parents)?

## **Part II: Immigration Experience**

- When you think of immigration, what is the first thing that comes to mind?
- Tell me a story of your immigration starting with the very first time the idea was brought up.
- How did you prepare?
- What did you imagine it would be like?
- What were your feelings about immigration?
- Tel me about the first few months.
- What do you remember about that time? What don't you want to remember?
- What were you like as a person?
- What did you have to adjust to?
- How were things different from what you imagined?
- What were the things you missed? How did you deal with it?
- When would you say you started feeling more comfortable?
- Who were your friends at that initial period of time and how did it change?
- How do you identify yourself. How did it change over time?
- Are there certain stages in the character of your interaction with Americans?

- What do you remember about your interactions with other Russian immigrants? How about now?
- What important aspects of your personality are being reflected in those interactions and how does it change over time?
- Have you ever thought about visiting your country of origin? Did you actually visit and what it was like? What kind of changes in that country were the most noticeable for you and why?

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