# INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner.  Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Journeys of Immigration Among Young Adult Russian Jews: Story of personal change

by

Zoya Simakhodskaya

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York

2002

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

UMI Number: 3063884

Copyright 2002 by
Simakhodskaya, Zoya

All rights reserved.

UMI®

UMI Microform 3063884
Copyright 2002 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

© 2002

ZOYA SIMAKHODSKAYA

All rights reserved



Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

7/25/02
Date

Chair of examining committee

8/8/02
Date

Executive Officer

Laurence J. Gould, Ph.D.

Misha Galperin, Ph.D.

Ilene Green, Ph.D.

Lissa Weinstein, Ph.D.

Supervisory committee

City University of New York



Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Abstract

## Journeys of Immigration Among Young Adult Russian Jews: Story of personal change

by

Zoya Simakhodskaya

Adviser: Jeffrey J. Rosen, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study was to explore the subjective experience of the immigration process, and what it reveals about one's sense of self, using qualitative methods. This study focused on young adult Russian Jews living in the New York metropolitan area. The first goal was to describe the patterns of personal change associated with the immigration experience. The second goal was to develop a description of Jewishness for this population and the impact of the immigration experience on this construct. After providing an historical background for Jewish immigration from the former Soviet Union, the literature on identity, immigration, and Jewishness was reviewed. Empirical material regarding subjective experiences of eleven young adult Russian Jews who immigrated to the US as adults between five and eleven years ago were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the data was guided by qualitative methodology and psychodynamic theory. The immigrants in this study conveyed a multiplicity of affective experiences related to their immigration process, including sadness, uncertainty, fear, loneliness, excitement, embarrassment, anger, depression, and nostalgia. An in-depth analysis of each person's story indicated a close relationship between the dominating affects they reported and their general defensive style and identity. While the psychoanalytic literature on the subject of immigration and its




Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

impact on one's sense of self typically focuses on trauma, the results of the current study revealed a more normative process of coping with a significant life transition. The factors that promoted or impaired the participants in negotiating immigration were discussed. All participants engaged in negotiating the two major aspects of the immigration experience: the importance of continuity and the process of change in one's sense of self. The immigration process, with its experiences of uprootedness, presented a challenge to young adult Russian Jews. This challenge expressed itself in the process of managing rapid and unanticipated multiple pressures to change in the face of immigration while trying to preserve the sameness and continuity of self over time. The positive changes in sense of self reported by the participants in this study included increased confidence in their abilities, increased independence, and self-actualization. However, these changes at times came at a cost of feelings of instability, and becoming harsh and depressed. Jewishness was found to be an important part of the participants' identities. The results of this study revealed multiple and coexisting meanings of Jewishness, including a sense of being different, belonging to a group or a nation, being a component of one's background and roots, contributing to knowledge of history and culture, faith and religion; affective experiences were frequently attached to the experience of Jewishness. Jewishness is a changing rather than a static construct. Having been challenged to reflect on their Jewishness through immigration process, young adult Russian Jews are in the process of exploring its meanings and finding a way to express it such that it fits their self-concept. This occurs in the same way that they are negotiating the meanings of Russianness and Americanness.



Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Jeffrey Rosen for his invaluable guidance during my doctoral studies and in this research. He created a safe yet rigorous intellectual environment and challenged me to reach for excellence and introspection. But most of all, thank you for your stable presence, sense of humor, and your unwavering belief in my abilities.

Much thanks to my friends Camilla Franck and Dan Grady who were there every step of the way. They provided an invaluable insight and clinical expertise regarding the data during our research group meetings, as well as in reading and editing this manuscript. Thank you for your encouragement and support. I also would like to thank Irina Volynskaya for her consistent commitment to this study and insightful comments regarding the data and my writing.

Important contributions to this study included discussions with my professors, supervisors, and colleagues at the City College Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology. Thanks to Dr. Lawrence Gould who supported this study in its early conception and encouraged me to use myself as a clinical tool. Also thanks to Drs. Steven Tuber, Katherine Oram, Lissa Weinstein, and Ilene Green for their encouragement and clinical insight. My friends Regine Anna Seckinger, Erika Goldberg, Jody Brandt, and Mark Edison deserve special appreciation for their camaraderie and generosity. I would also like to thank Jackie Williams Mose who helped me negotiate the confusing terrain of paperwork and provided moral support during my five years at City College.

Many thanks to Dr. Misha Galperin who not only encouraged my pursuit of this study and provided continuous support, but also became a source of limitless connections



Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

with professionals in the immigration community. I also would like to thank Drs. Dina Birman, Philip Kasinitz, and Fran Markowitz for their valuable insights and motivation.

Thanks to all who made the completion of this project possible: my transcribers, Ms. Lynn Dion and Tara Tamny. Special thanks to Dr. Wilma Rosen for her wonderful laughter and tasty snacks, which helped to keep things in perspective.

Thanks to my many immigrant friends, including Natasha Altshuler, Mark Meytin, Alena Sharkova, and Ilya Liberman, for their inspiration and willingness to share their own experiences with me. I also would like to thank my family for encouraging me to be the best I can be and for accepting me the way I am. Thanks to my parents Tatyana Maltseva and Azim Simakhodskiy, my stepparents Lyudmila Medvedeva and Eduard Maltsev, my siblings Max, Svetlana, Olga, and Anna, and last but not least, my grandmother Esfir Velednitskaya.

I would like to say a very special thank you to my husband, Dr. Steven Cercy, who encouraged me throughout my graduate studies, proofread countless pages of my writing, fed me gourmet dinners and nurtured me in multiple ways. I could not have done it without you.

Finally, I would like to thank the participants in this study for giving me the privilege of sharing their stories with me. Thank you for your courage, thoughtfulness, and generosity. Огромное спасибо!



Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Table of Content


**Introduction** 2

**The Story of Boris** 6

**1. Literature Review** 11

**1.1 Who are Russian Jewish immigrants?** 11
History
Jewish identity of Russian Jews

**1.2 Jewishness** 18
Jewish identity
Jewishness and immigration

**1.3 The crossroads of identity and immigration** 34
Identity and its development
Immigration as trauma
Immigration process: affective experiences and stages of adjustment
Immigration and identity
Akhtar: four tracks in identity transformation following immigration
The Kleinian notion of developmental positions as it relates to the immigration experience
Birman's model of acculturation styles
Immigration as a life transition

**2. Methodology** 70

**2.1 Participants** 70
**2.2 Qualitative psychobiographical methodology** 71
**2.3 Interview protocol** 73
**2.4 Procedures** 74
**2.5 Data analysis** 75

**3. The stories** 78

Regina - "Don't put me in a box - I want to be myself' 79
Mark - "I feel torn - Who am I, really?" 100
Natasha - "I want to fit in. I don't like to stand out." 118
Lena - "I want to be myself but also to fit in." 137
Olga - "I long for stability and permanence in relationships." 158
Masha - "I feel overwhelmed and need emotional connection." 180
Anna - "I am a survivor." 201
Andrei - "I approach things logically and rationally." 225
Vlad - "I want to achieve to show others my abilities." 249




Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Alex - "I am self sufficient. I am responsible for those close to me." 272

**4. Demographic patterns and examination of thematic experience** 292

**4.1 Participants** 293

**4.2 Immigration experience** 294

Theme 1: How the decision to immigrate was made had an impact on the participants' adaptation process.

Theme 2: Multiplicity of affective experiences associated with immigration process.

- Uncertainty and Fear of the Unknown
- Loneliness and Need for Connection
- Nostalgia
- Excitement and Sadness
- Depression and Anger
- Inferiority and Embarrassment
- Unnamed Feelings

Theme 3: Similarities and differences in participants' descriptions of the immigration process and its stages.

- Similarities
- Differences

Theme 4: Participants varied in the extent and quality of their current relationship with Russianness and Americanness.

- Relationship to both countries
- Relationship to both peoples
- Ethnic identification

Theme 5: Impact of the immigration process on participants' identity: positive experience at a cost.

- Self discovery and self actualization
- Increased confidence
- Increased independence
- Cost: depression, instability, and harshness

**4.3 Jewishness** 321

Theme 1: Jewish identity has multiple and coexisting meanings.

- Being different
- Belonging
- Background and roots
- Knowledge
- Affect
- Faith and religion

Theme 2: Participants varied in ways of responding to anti-Semitism and feeling different.

Theme 3: Immigration had an impact on participants' Jewish identity.



Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**5. Discussion of the results: towards a better understanding of the immigration process and Jewish identity.** 332
**5.1 Immigration experience** 332
**5.2 Jewishness** 355

**Concluding remarks** 367

**Appendix A. Prescreening form** 370

**Appendix B. Semi-structured interview** 371

**Appendix C. Consent form** 375

**Appendix D. Coding of the first interview** 376

**Appendix E. Themes from Boris' interviews** 377

**Appendix F. Themes for all participants** 378

**Bibliography** 381



Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# List of Tables

Table 1: Participants' demographics 293

Table 2: Immigration demographics 294

Table 3: Russianness and Americanness 313



Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"As long as the world around me has been new each time, it has not become my world; I lived with my teeth clenched against the next assault of the unfamiliar. But now, the year has assumed an understandable sequence within which I play the variations of a professional New York life. The social world in which I move has comprehensible elements and dimensions. I am no longer mystified by the rules and rituals of friendship and of love. It is only within such frames and patterns that any one moment is intelligible, that stimulus transforms itself into experience and movement into purpose. And it is only within an intelligible human context that a face can become dear, a person known. Pattern is the soil of significance; and it is surely one of the hazards of emigration, and exile, and extreme mobility, that one is uprooted from that soil."

"Lost in Translation" by Eva Hoffman, p. 278

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Introduction

In 1992 I immigrated to the United States from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) at age 22 as a Jewish refugee. My journey started long before I stepped off the plane with my family on a bright June evening in Baltimore. Although I reached my final destination that day, the journey of my immigration continues. I learned English, acquired cultural etiquette and traditions, developed close relationships with Americans, pursued my education, and entered the field of psychology. Yet, after ten years in the United States, I often feel as if I live simultaneously in two worlds. Or perhaps I live in a third world that I am creating. While every immigrant takes his or her own individual path on this journey, all of us are searching for answers to the questions, Who am I? Where do I belong? How did I change? How am I different? Who am I in the process of becoming? These questions, which are familiar to every human being, are especially significant for an immigrant who is faced with living in and negotiating a strange world.

Through my personal experiences, conversations with my family and friends, and clinical work with other immigrants, I became fascinated with the process of immigration and its impact on one's identity. How does this process affect one's sense of self? What is the character of the interplay between immigration experience and process and one's identity?

While there have been many studies conducted with this subgroup of immigrants, researchers have often focused on issues of psychological adaptation (Birman & Tyler, 1994; Dorman, 2001; Flaherty et al., 1986; 1988; Mirsky et al., 1992; Rotenberg et al., 1996), mental illness (Ponizovsky et al., 1998; Ritsner & Ponizovsky, 1998; Shemesh et al., 1993), acculturation, employment and educational achievement, and resettlement

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

(Markus & Schwartz, 1983). None of these studies have attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of immigrants' subjective experience of the immigration process and personal development using qualitative, narrative approach.

This study will address two main issues. The first is the broader and more inclusive issue. It is the development of an adequate description of the immigration experience and personal change. How does a young Russian Jew negotiate the immigration experience and personal change? Through a series of semi-structured interviews, participants in this study will reflect on this question. How does an immigrant deal with losses and difficulties inherent in this process? What are the factors that help the immigrant navigate this new world? How does an immigrant's identity impact the way the immigration experience is negotiated? Although there is a large body of literature describing immigration as traumatic and severely stressful (Aroian, Spitzer, & Bell, 1996; Galperin, 1988; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Markowitz, 1994; Slonim-Nevo & Sharaga, 1997; Yaglom, 1991; 1993), I agree with Yeh (1976) and Zaborowski (1999) who suggested immigration can also have a positive impact on one's identity and development. My study will seek to examine this possibility.

The second issue deals more specifically with Jewish identity. As compared to a common assumption that being Jewish refers to one's religious identity, in the FSU, "Jew" ("evrei") referred to one's nationality, or ethnicity, and this was defined by the state. The current study aims to develop a description of Jewishness for this population and the interaction of this Jewishness with the immigration experience. How do young Russian immigrants define their Jewishness? How is their Jewish identity affected by the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigration process? How does their Jewish identity fit in with their general sense of identity and its development?

The results of this study will have implications for theories of first-generation immigrant identity development, with a particular focus on ethnic identity and its relationship to the general sense of identity. Since a person's identity is one of the components of general mental health, it is important to have information from the normative population in order to provide an adequate clinical assessment. In addition, understanding how immigration is experienced internally and how this experience is influenced by one's identity will have implications for the treatment of immigrants who seek psychological services. This study will also have implications for organizations involved in maintaining and promoting Jewish identity. Without an in-depth understanding of how Jewish immigrants view themselves ethnically and culturally, what their expectations are, and how their identity develops, these agencies will continue to fall short of their goals in their attempts to engage Jews generally, and Russian Jews in particular.

In the first two chapters, I will review the literature relevant to my questions and describe in more detail what I propose. In Chapter 1, I will briefly review the history of Russian Jewish immigration, discuss issues of Jewish identity as they relate to Russian Jews, and review the literature on the development of Jewish identity as based on developmental theory. I will also discuss immigration and its impact on the person's identity and Jewishness. As I do so, I will address the concepts of identity and immigration, the theories behind them, and how they relate to Russian Jews. To better illustrate my thinking and the literature, I will use my own experience and my pilot study, a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

depiction of Boris[1], the first participant in my study, throughout my writing. In Chapter 2, I will provide a brief theoretical basis for qualitative research, describe the selection and recruitment of participants, the interview and its sources, and the process of data analysis. Chapter 3 offers the participants' stories, the themes that emerged from the data, including direct quotes from the interviews, as well as my thoughts and relevant theoretical comments. This chapter presents the first level of data analysis. In Chapter 4 I will summarize and discuss the results of the study, including demographic patterns and an examination of the thematic experiences. Chapter 5 provides the discussion of the findings and formulation of theoretical understanding. Finally, I will make concluding remarks in Chapter 6 and address implications of the findings.

[1] The participants' names have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# The Story of Boris

Observation note: *I met with Boris three times for 45 minutes each. Before meeting each time, he typically rescheduled several times stating that he was extremely busy at work. He controlled the scheduling and the amount of time for each interview. Throughout the interviews he remained somewhat guarded, with certain topics being of limits for in-depth discussion, such as his childhood, and his relationship with parents and wife. While I conducted the interview in English for the purpose of being able to discuss it with my research group, off tape Boris only spoke Russian to me. When I contacted him for a follow-up after the last interview, I learned that he quit his job and was working on some projects at home, as well as looking for another job.*

## Immigration Experience

Boris is a 32 year-old young man who immigrated to the United States from Ukraine in 1988. He lives with his wife and their 3-year-old son in a New York suburb. They chose this suburb because of the quality of the school system and the presence of other young Russian immigrants with children. He has a graduate degree in Economics and works as a software engineer. He enjoys his job, feels competent, and makes a comfortable living. As Boris states, "in another part of my life I try to run a small economics research business with a few graduate students." He loves spending time with his child (including playing guitar for him), reading Russian and American books, attending occasional cultural outings, and hanging out with his Russian friends. It is important for him to have Russian friends and to be involved in Russian community. He speaks Russian only with his friends, except for certain topics when he switches to English (e.g., professional contexts, discussing movies). Boris felt that he and his wife "complement each other's personalities," as she is driven and he is relaxed. He feels that

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

she keeps him on track by focusing his efforts on what's important in life. Boris acknowledged that stability is an important aspect of his life and that his family has provided such stability for him.

His family belonged to a group in the FSU called "refuseniks." His parents applied for emigration in the late 1970s but were refused exit visas by the Soviet government. When Soviet authorities re-opened the borders after the beginning of perestroika, Boris's family decided to immigrate to the US. While both parents had advanced degrees (music and engineering), they were afraid of not being able to survive economically. Everyone else around them was leaving at the time, so he and his family went along with the wave. His family wanted better opportunities, freedom, and "a more decent living." Boris was studying in an engineering school at the time and avoiding the military draft. Although he always wanted to study economics and be in academia, Boris stated that they spent all their money on his avoiding the draft and did not have enough money for bribing the university. He described himself as a person who "just came out of his teenage years very lost." He described mixed feelings about immigrating, being excited and afraid at the same time.

Upon his arrival to the US at age 20, Boris immediately went to college to study economics. The first years of immigration were hard. His family received some support from resettlement agencies, but mostly relied on other immigrants for information about adaptation and resources. While his father was able to find an engineering job quickly (and continues to work for the same company now), his mother switched to social work for many years before being able to go back to music. Boris worked menial jobs and struggled to adjust. As he described his adjustment, he went back and forth between

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

calling it easy and difficult. He felt that he did not receive good advice regarding choosing schools and taking appropriate classes. At that time, Boris met his wife as an undergraduate. He wasn't satisfied with his undergraduate education in economics and continued his studies in graduate school. He and his wife got married in spite of their parents' objections that they were both young and unprepared while Boris was in graduate school. After finishing school and working for a year, Boris realized that he could not make enough money in economics and switched to programming. His wife is also a programmer.

Gradually, they became more financially stable and felt more secure. He had many Russian friends who supported him during the initial transition. By the third or fourth year, Boris began exploring American culture, including books, movies, TV shows. As his English improved and he got to know more Americans, Boris started to enjoy this new world that opened up for him. He felt that America is a "very reasonable" place where things work as you expect them to work. Boris likes going to Brighton Beach area[2] to "see my community prosper," but only once in a while. He described it as a "juicy" place where you can meet all kinds of characters. While there, Boris mostly buys Russian children's books and Russian food.

After eight years in the US, Boris went to visit his grandmother in the Ukraine. The trip was a shock. He saw high school friends who used to be intellectuals and later

---

[2] The Brighton Beach area is located on the southern end of Brooklyn and has been traditionally defined as the Russian enclave, or "Russian-speaking hub," of New York since the late 1970s (Lewine, 1999). While at first it was the launching ground for many Russian immigrants, more recently it has served as the center of Russian restaurants and food purveyors, Russian music, and services for those who do not speak English or are in the US illegally. Currently, there are a number of other neighborhoods as well in New York that are dominated by Russian immigrants from the FSU.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

had become involved in business dealings resulting in crime. After the trip, he did not call or write anyone, cutting off all communications with people who stayed there. When asked about his own change during all these years, he spoke about growing up: being more organized, determined, focused. He attributed it to being older. However, he also acknowledged the impact of immigration on him a person. Having "survived successfully" the tough path of immigration, Boris felt he could do more than generally was expected of him.

**Jewishness**

In terms of Jewishness, Boris has known he was Jewish for as long as he can remember. He spent his childhood summers with his maternal grandparents who were quite religious even in Ukraine. Being Jewish at that time meant that certain paths were closed to them and that there were people who disliked them. Right now, he is not sure what it means to be Jewish. It is mostly a cultural, historic connection. It means to be born Jewish. It is a feeling of being a part of a group of people who watch out for each other, for themselves, and for the greater good of the group. He is also somewhat observant; he and his wife light candles on the Sabbath, observe Passover, and lights candles on Hanukkah. When he first came to the US, Boris explored Judaism. After one of the interviews, he told me that his "rich uncle character" was a dedicated religious Jew in New York who was quite active and respected in the community. For a time, Boris studied torah and went regularly to the synagogue. However, presently he does not feel a very strong connection to the religious part of his Jewish identity. He wants to send his

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

son to Hebrew school so he can learn enough about being Jewish to feel Jewish, but does not want him to be too religious.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Chapter 1

# Literature Review

In this chapter, I will first briefly review the history of Russian Jewish immigration; I will then discuss issues of Jewish identity as they relate to Russian Jews and review the literature on the development of Jewish identity as based on developmental theory. The literature on immigration and its impact on a person's identity from the psychoanalytic perspective will be discussed. As I do so, I will address the concepts of identity and immigration, the theories behind them, and how they relate to Russian Jews.

## I.1 Who Are Russian Jewish Immigrants?

History

The beginning of Jewish immigration from Russia dates to the latter portion of the 19th century. The first and largest wave of Russian Jews escaped the Bolshevik revolution and settled in large cities near major US ports. They were mostly merchants and shtetl residents, and generally were highly religious. The next wave arrived after the end of World War II. The third wave is sometimes referred to as the Class of 1979 (Kosmin, 1990). During this wave, many Jewish dissidents were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. They tended to be highly educated and professional, and had strong anti-Communist sentiments. The fourth wave of Russian Jewish immigration was one of the largest and occurred in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the period from 1968 to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1993, over 1,000,000 Soviet[3] Jews resettled in Israel and over 600,000 immigrated to the United States.

New York City has one of the largest Russian immigrant communities in the US. Some estimate it to be about 500,000 in the Metropolitan area (Kliger & Carnes, 2000). Most Soviet Jews came to the US as refugees, to escape casual and institutionalized anti-Semitism. Many also immigrated to Israel, Canada, or Germany. After 1989, due to the changes in immigration laws and INS procedures, only those Jews with close relatives in the US (parents, children, siblings, and spouses) were more likely to be granted a refugee status in the US and permitted to reunite with their families. Although there is a definite distinction between exiles' (refugees) and immigrants' experiences of immigration (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989), this issue is more complicated for Soviet Jews immigrating after 1986. While any refugee could provide examples of his or her experience of anti-Semitism, for this wave of immigrants the most frequently stated reasons for immigration were the deepening economic crisis, political turmoil, and ethnic unrest in the USSR (Heitman, 1991). There are still many Jews remaining in the FSU and there is a definite resurgence of Jewishness and Jewish activities. Unlike refugees and exiles from other countries such as Cambodia or Cuba who cannot return to their country for fear of persecution, Soviet immigrants often return for visits and now can return permanently. Therefore, their "internal" immigration status is somewhat more ambivalent. The study will explore this issue.

---

[3] For the purpose of this study "Soviet" and "Russian" will be used interchangeably to identify this population. "Russian" is the term often used because it is the language most immigrants from the FSU speak.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Upon arrival in the US, Soviet Jews have typically been provided support by the American Jewish community and government programs that address their financial and social needs. Most Russians who immigrated during the fourth wave came from urban centers in the Western regions of the FSU and were highly educated and professional. Since they had many relatives and friends in the US, these immigrants were better prepared for what was awaiting them compared to the earlier waves. Before immigrating, many studied English, acquired driver's licenses, and were able to sell their apartments and transfer some money to the US. In general, according to the 1996 Census Bureau survey of New York City housing, 48% of Russians are between 18 and 50 years old, 41% have a college degree or higher, and over 55% have an annual household income of over $30,000 (with 17% being over $60,000). While initially settling in ethnic enclaves, many young Russian Jews eventually move into better and more Americanized neighborhoods after acquiring an education and getting a job. Boris is a good example of this tendency. This is clearly a group of high achievers who seem to integrate well economically into American society and show good prospects for "upward mobility" in this capitalist system.

Jewish Identity of Russian Jews

> I was myself a Jew, and it had always seemed to me not only unworthy but positively senseless to deny the fact. What bound me to Jewry was (I am ashamed to admit) neither faith nor national pride, for I have always been an unbeliever and was brought up without any religion though not without a respect for what are called the 'ethical' standards of human civilization...But plenty of other things remained over to make the attraction of Jewry and Jews irresistible - many obscure emotional forces, which were the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words, as well as a clear

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> consciousness of inner identity, the safe privacy of a common mental construction.
>
> (Freud, 1926, p. 274).

It is interesting to note that this was the only time Freud mentioned the concept of identity, during an address to B'nai B'rith. As it was for Freud (Rice, 1994), Jewish identity historically has been accompanied by conflicts and tensions, shame and pride. While many prior studies have defined Jewish identity in a variety of ways, no single definition will be used in the present study. The participants of this study will provide their own sense of their Jewish identity. Nonetheless, all Russian Jewish immigrants have shared a common experience. All are well aware that while they lived in the FSU, the state defined their status as Jews.

Jewishness was defined by the Soviet government as "nationality," which resembles the American concept of ethnicity. Each person's nationality was recorded in the internal passport and was often referred to as the "fifth line." In most cases, fifth line indicated the republic of origin, such as "Russian," "Ukrainian," "Armenian." However, one remained a Jew independent of the republic of residence. Considering the small number of Jews in the FSU and long history of discrimination, being Jewish was equivalent to formally assigned membership in minority status in the US. Acceptance into special schools, entry into universities, membership in the Communist party, and employment was often dependent on one's fifth line. Even as early as elementary and middle school teachers' grade journals indicated their students' nationality. In a way, it was a "label" that inevitably affected your life. One example is the story told in my family about how my mother got into medical school. She was only able to enter on her fifth attempt, and only because she was lucky enough to be tested that year by high school

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

teachers not trained in certain "selection" practices, rather than full time medical school faculty. During two of her four prior attempts, the officials laughed in her face and gave her a low grade with the comment, "What are you doing here?" Other Jews, myself included, went to smaller towns or other cities where institutional anti-Semitism was not as developed. Yet others gave up trying to pursue their passions and became engineers, teachers, or musicians, professions that had low pay and little prestige. Over the course of Soviet history the majority of Jews assimilated into Russian culture. They preferred a "cosmopolitan" life, speaking Russian, attending universities, working as professionals, and knew very little about their religious background (Markowitz, 1993). However, they also were able to preserve a kind of ethnic Jewish identification based on the "fifth line," a few cultural customs, and most importantly, a common history and ethics (Markowitz, 1993; Ritterband, 1993).

> (Right now, what does it mean for you to be Jewish?) Right now, God knows. I sort of ... you know, I want my, umm... well, it ... for me, I suppose ... I have sort of a cultural connection. I think that you have to know the culture that you come from, and the religion that you come from, and um, you know, it's not, umm, it's tradition that your people have lived with for thousands of years, and it's certainly worth studying and knowing. (Interview 3).

It was not unusual for Soviet Jews to cope with discrimination by minimizing its importance, "passing" as someone of Russian nationality, or by experiencing indignation. "Passing" included a variety of tactics, including legally changing one's name (some families changed their last names to sound more Russian) or changing one's nationality in one's passport to the nationality of a non-Jewish parent (if the marriage was an interethnic one). Trying to "pass" or assimilate is a typical response of a minority group in order to survive discrimination (Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1990). Feelings of shame may be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

understood as an internalization of negative attitudes of others (Kaufman & Raphael, 1987), as if to say: "They say I am bad, so there must be a reason for it." For example, a common myth or historical reason among Jews why it is that Russians or Ukrainians hate Jews is said to be because Judas betrayed Jesus.

However, one often hears stories of pride and survival against all odds. In spite of discrimination, many Jews were able to rise educationally and professionally in the FSU. They were able to do so in part because of the strong networks within Jewish community and their ability to use them well. As Ostow (1977) notes, the myths of crisis, surviving attack, and triumphing over enemies reminds the individual that he too overcame danger, and gives him a sense of potency and optimism. Similarly, this may give rise to an exaggerated sense of agency, as if to say: "We did well because we are smart and special."

With the fall of the Soviet Union and massive Jewish immigration to the US and Israel, the meaning of Jewishness for Russian Jews has begun to shift. Anthropologist Fran Markowitz (1995, 1997) discussed the issues of Jewishness and Russianness with Russian Jewish adolescents in Moscow. She described a number of ways these adolescents talk about their Jewishness. First, there is a view that Jewishness is about religion and lifestyle that demand faith and ritual; you are not Jewish just because you were born to parents of Jewish nationality. Second, Russianness and Jewishness are incompatible; they represent two kinds of characters, histories, and destinies with assimilation or discrimination as the inevitable consequences of remaining in Russia; to be 100% Jewish, it is necessary to know fully that you are a Jew and belong to the Jewish people. Third, some teenagers saw themselves and their future as "Jews in Russia," believing that their Jewish upbringing, with its emphasis on sobriety, education, and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

achievement, gives them special advantages. Fourth, a person can be both a Jew and a Russian, a sort of Russian-Jewish hybrid. And fifth, inescapable contradictions are intrinsic to the overlapping identities and lead to the sense that "I am a person of the world, sometimes I don't know for a fact who I am." In addition, Markowitz mentioned one adolescent whose views changed within a three-year interval from feeling strongly Jewish and being observant to acquiring a new view of himself as "a person of the world." She concludes that almost all teenagers conceived of their Jewish identity as flexible and voluntary: they decide how to "avoid, embrace, celebrate, practice, or reject it always-sometimes-never" (p.42).

However, considering developmentally appropriate identity questioning and shifting among adolescents, it is not clear whether a similar dynamic will be found among adult participants in the present study. It is improbable that any of them would speak about being "a person of the world" and deny their Jewishness completely. They all lived until at least18 years of age in the FSU and have experienced Soviet "nationality" politics first hand. Even among second generation[4] adult Russian Jews Jewish identity is strong, has multiple meanings, and is more ethnic than religious (Kasinitz et al., 2000).

A recent sociological study of first generation Russian Jews in New York City explored their multiple identities. Kliger and Carnes (2000) offered immigrants a list of 14 identities (considering the approach toward identity in this study, I would call these "identifications") to chose from in answering the question "Who do you think you are?" They identified five basic categories in interactive identity: Jewish, immigrant, American,

[4] In current sociological literature, "first generation" refers to those who immigrated as adults, "second generation" includes those who were born here of immigrant parents, and "one-and-a-half generation" are those who immigrated between early childhood and age 12.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ethnic (e.g., Russian or Bukharian), and cosmopolitan (e.g. woman). Almost three-fourths of respondents shared some sort of Jewish identity. 67% of Russian Jews consider their Jewish identity to be "very important" or "important." When asked about the meaning of being a Jew, the following hierarchy evolved: 1) belonging to the Jewish people (56%); 2) remembering Holocaust (42%); 3) being proud of the Jewish people (39%); 4) knowing and remembering Jewish history (31%); and 5) supporting Israel (30%). A few participants also indicated interest in cultural and religious practice. There were only two "negative" choices offered: to be the object of others' hostility and to feel oneself different from other nations. While my own experience, Boris' narrative, and stories told by other immigrants are full of conflictual feelings, the study did not address this issue. It is also important to note that the participants in this study included immigrants from various waves of immigration and of various ages (from 14 to 90). The researchers did not report how these variables affected one's meaning of identity. In the present study I will attempt to explore in depth not only the meaning of Jewishness, but also its origin, and its relationship to the overall identity of young adults.

In the modern world the meanings of concepts like Jewishness are not fixed. It is impossible to understand the dynamics surrounding them without deeper exploration of such meanings. Before I discuss how Jewishness and immigrants' other ethnic identifications may be affected by immigration, I would like to expand on the concept of Jewish identity and research about it.

## I. 2 Jewishness

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jewish Identity

Depending on who is writing about it, Jewish identity is described as ethnic identity or identification, religious identity, ethnicity, social identity, or group identification. What is often not stated but implied is the notion that Jewish identity is one of the components of the personal identity. It does not exist outside of it. Erikson wrote about identity having a number of connotations. One of these connotations refers to the maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity (Erikson, 1959). Following Erikson, Akhtar and Samuel (1996) define one of the seven components of cohesive identity as *ethnicity*. *Ethnicity* is the culture of a people, including values, child-rearing practices, sense of history, modes of expression, and patterns of interpersonal behavior. It is a sense of belonging to an historical community. In terms of behavior, one is aware (or observant) of religious holidays, has a subtle preference for homoethnic ties, certain foods and music, and uses linguistic expressions consistent with one's roots. It is probably the broadest definition that we can apply to Jewish identity. There are a number of different perspectives on this topic in the literature.

More recent research on being Jewish in the US, in keeping with Markowitz's and Kliger and Carnes' findings, shows that it carries multiple meanings. Horowitz (2000) created a portrait of American Jewry using both quantitative and qualitative methods. She identified seven qualitatively different patterns of relating to or defining the meaning of being Jewish: various levels of indifference, subjective, strong cultural-communal, tradition-oriented, orthodox, and non-orthodox intensively engaged. This typology was measured by three scales: 1) the subjective Jewish Centrality Scale (looking directly at a person's internal relationship to Jewishness, separate from any active, outward

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

expression); 2) the Religious Ritual Scale (tapping a person's religious ritual practice); and 3) the Cultural-Communal Scale (addressing the person's involvement in "cultural-communal" activities). Considering the history of Russian Jews, subjective, cultural-communal, and tradition-oriented patterns are of most interest.

In terms of subjective Jewishness, Horowitz suggested that there appear to be two aspects of it: personal and relational. The personal aspect refers to being Jewish as related to one's self-description and the relational aspect speaks to being Jewish as involving linkages between the self and other people or entities (Jews, friends, Judaism, Jewish tradition). Horowitz suggested that these two dimensions should be fully explored in further research. These two aspects of Jewishness are especially important for the present study. As my participants talk about their Jewishness and their commitment to it, I should attend and probe issues about their own sense of Jewishness as it relates to who they are and how they see it linked to others. For example, Boris clearly speaks to the relational aspect of Jewishness. He focuses more on the "connection" to his community, his feelings toward observance, and toward history and tradition of the Jewish people.

Horowitz also reported that Jewish identity is not a monolithic entity, but rather it changes as the person develops. Similarly, the quality of a person's present involvement or lack of involvement with Jewishness is better understood when looking at his or her history. For example, if we look at Boris' history, it is clear that his childhood experiences with Judaism influenced his wish to learn more. While Horowitz offered a more comprehensive method of exploring Jewish identity, the task remains of understanding how one's Jewishness fits in with the overall personal identity. As Boris speaks about the meaning of being Jewish, he first describes it almost in a dichotomized way:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> It didn't mean much. You know. . . one of the focal points was probably that there's certain paths that were closed. And there's certain people who didn't like us. And -- but otherwise? And the, the. . . because there were certain people who liked us, who DIDN'T like us, we sort of hang together. A lot of my friends were Jewish. And a lot of my friends WEREN'T! But, um, that was pretty much it, the sense that, there's like and dislike. (Would you also call it sort of a sense of being different? Or something "other"?) No, not that different, no. Just. . . just that, the like and dislike. Different as far as having it indicated in my, you know, passport or whatever came before that, because passport was given when I was sixteen. (interview 3).

Boris uses categories such as "like" or "dislike", "closed" or "open" to describe the meaning of being Jewish. It is very similar to how he described other aspects of his life, with opposites, with things being put into symbolic "containers" in order to avoid ambivalence or incongruity.

Compared to Horowitz's complex view of Jewishness, what we see more frequently in empirical research on Jewish identity is a lack of such complexity. For example, a recent well-known study by Epstein and Levin (1996) on the impact of Jewish identity on the psychological adjustment of Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel simply concluded that subjects with the weakest level of Jewish identity were the most distressed and least satisfied with their lives in Israel. The authors measured Jewish identity with fewer than ten questions based on a Likert-type scale of multiple choice; the questions included: the role that being Jewish plays, religious observance, the degree to which one feels Russian or Jewish, the impact on their Jewish identity of living in Israel, the way they expressed their Jewish identity while in the USSR, and the way they define their Jewish identity at present. I feel such an approach to Jewish identity is simplistic and deceiving. While I agree with Erikson and his followers who believed that having a positive connection to one's ethnic groups (strong sense of ethnic identity) is a part of general

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

well-being, taken out of context ethnic identity cannot account for the results of the above mentioned study. Were those who scored low on Jewish identity also people with a less cohesive, conflictual personal identity? Further I do not believe that we can assess a subjective internal experience of Jewish identity (a construct that is potentially full of conflict and confusion) with ten questions.

Russian Jews are not alone in the internal conflict between shame and pride about their Jewish identity. The literature on American Jewry has similar themes. It is not surprising. Many immigrants come to the US with a history of marginalization in their own country; many continue to experience discrimination here. American history is marked by bouts of anti-Semitism. Lax and Richards (1981) creatively investigated the nature and type of factors which contribute to the formation of Jewish identity for adolescents in New York City Jewish schools. Based on qualitative observations of the subjects' stories using techniques from TAT and Early Memories Test interpretations, the authors suggested that being Jewish in the United States can be a cause of internal conflict, usually associated with painful experiences. It was noted that ambivalent feelings stirred up around being Jewish can be dealt with defensively or resolved in a manner that will not interfere with personal growth. The authors did not elaborate on this suggestion, except to say that both defensive and adaptive resolutions can be either personal or related to a group.

Kaufman and Raphael (1987) were more specific in offering a perspective on resolution of this internal conflict. They suggested that being Jewish in the United States potentially creates a conflict of identification because one cannot belong both to the Jewish community and to the wider culture without such conflict. It is based on the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

historical context of a Jew as "an eternal outsider" and the American value of conformity which makes those who are different feel inferior. The national and ethnic policies in the former Soviet Union followed similar principals, although for different reasons. If one has a predominantly positive Jewish identification, it is achieved by withdrawing from the majority culture. The more contemporary writings on this topic indicate a change in the culture of American society with the movement towards pluralism and multiculturalism (Birman, 1994). The question of whether such changes have an impact on people's subjective experience of difference and prejudice, continues to be the object of empirical inquiry. Nevertheless, the theoretical exploration offered by Kaufman and Raphael (1987) may be helpful for the current study. The authors argued that the only way to overcome this withdrawal or rejection of one's Jewishness and to experience wholeness, dignity and self-affirmation is to work through *shame*.

This argument is based on the theory that one's identity is shaped by shame and identification. "Identity is not merely the sense of self, but includes our enduring beliefs and feelings about ourselves translated into action: the active relationship the self comes to have with the self" (Kaufman & Raphael, 1987, p. 33).[5] This evolving relationship is based on interpersonal learning in the family. Shame is the affect of inferiority, of indignity, defeat, transgression, and alienation. It is felt as an inner torment. As discrete shame experiences (scenes of shame) become magnified and linked together, they are internalized into our belief system. We recreate these scenes with language-action patterns: self-blame, self-contempt, and comparison-making. One expression of such

[5] I realize that I am introducing concepts that require further elaboration ("self", "identity"). This discussion will come later when I discuss the concept of identity in detail.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

internalized shame is hiding one's Jewishness or even expressing contempt for it when around non-Jews. We can find examples of this among both American and Russian Jews. If one is unable to tolerate the feelings of shame and to overcome its sources, it may lead to maladaptive defensive strategies of avoidance and escape.

What is missing from this description is the other side of this process: positive identification with one's family and community. Similar to internalizing negative scenes and beliefs, we also internalize positive ones. When I attended Jewish weddings as a child, or listened to my family members and their Jewish friends proudly speak of being Jewish, I remember feeling proud, feeling a sense of belonging to something beyond my immediate surrounding. As I noted above, Boris' positive connection to his Jewish grandparents was one of the significant factors that influenced his desire to learn more about Judaism upon arrival to the US. Whether one internalizes negative or positive aspects of Jewishness, and what adaptive strategies one will use, will depend on the quality of one's relationship with family members (Horowitz, 2000). Not every negative scene of shame will be internalized, as one can also reject these scenes.

Schlesinger (1979) suggested a more positive view on Jewish identity through a perspective of humour. I remember clearly how a non-Jewish member of my family would often get disturbed by numerous "Jewish-directed" jokes made at our family gatherings. I always wondered why we enjoyed these jokes so much. According to Schlesinger, Eastern European Jewish life consists of a series of dualistic mental sets: specialness versus shameful vilification; powerful thinking versus powerlessness in action; cohesive communal closeness as opposed to segregation and isolation; potential for great rage checked by the realistic consequences of its overt, direct expression. Such incongruities

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

produce great anxiety, as well as tolerance for ambiguity and an increased capacity to alternate rapidly the frames of reference applied to inner and outer reality while at the same time maintaining the ego's control. "Ego-identity which grows out of the need to reconcile these tensions is both individually and collectively prepared to use humour which allows the covert expression of rage which raises to perfection the play with words and concepts and finally infuses these processes with the content of its life and values" (Schlesinger, 1979, p. 328).[6]

From the developmental point of view, these tensions, or incongruities, are part of normal developmental process. Schlesinger explains that negative or positive affects serve as signaling and communicating devices by infants to involve others in caretaking activities. When primitive affective patterns become integrated with conceptualization and symbolization, as well as physiologic components, it results in *emotional experience*, or "affective-cognitive-physiologic compound." Feeling of joy is the result of perceived congruity. As we mature, we need to reconcile several contradictions: a) between the perception of fragility of human relations and the need for establishing and maintaining relations with others; b) between developing emotional closeness and fear of fusion and loss of self; c) between striving for emotional separateness and distance and feelings of abandonment and isolation; d) between experiencing normal object loss and feelings of emptiness and despair. One adaptive mechanism that can be used to reconcile such contradictions is humor. Here is an example from my third interview with Boris as it relates to the question of Jewishness:

---

[6] In this case, "ego-identity" most likely refers to Erikson's concept described in "Identity and Life Cycle" (1959) and is also referred to as "self" by Schlesinger. These concepts will be described in more detail below.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> (When you think Jewish, what is the feeling? Or feelings?) I don't know, well, like just, um, you know there's, probably there's a connection to . . . being a social animal as humans are, you gotta feel part of a wolf pack, right? And you gotta watch out for the, uh, not only for your own benefit but to some extent for the benefit of the people you associate with. And, um, in order to associate with people you have to choose who to associate with. And once you're born Jewish, it's uh, you're sort of naturally given that wolf pack to associate with. (Laughs) So um, you know, that's all. Watch out for the greater good of that wolf pack while you're watching out for YOUR greater good. (So there are positive feelings about being Jewish?) Of course there are positive feelings. I mean, how can you have negative feelings about belonging to a wolf pack, right? (Laughs)

It is clear from the very first sentence that Jewishness is not a simple concept for Boris ("I don't know, well, like just, um, you know there's, probably..."). He does not really answer my question about "feelings." As he struggles to answer my question, he introduces the metaphor of a "wolf pack." First, there is an inevitability of being born Jewish. Second, it means being born into a "wolf pack." When I think of a wolf pack, the first thing I imagine is aggression and danger. Boris, however, focuses on the protective and interdependent characteristics of a wolf pack. Yet he is aware of this contradiction and makes a joke.

In sum, Jewish identity is a complex concept. It is one of the components of a person's overall identity. The salience and meaning of this component varies among individuals. Jewishness is filled with internal conflict and a sense of incongruities. How we resolve such incongruities speaks to who we are. What then transpires when we immigrate?

## Jewishness and Immigration

"A Jew is not a luxury, but a means of transportation," says folk knowledge in the FSU. This joke is another good example of Jews using humor to cope with a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

contradiction. What it refers to is the fact that Jews are one of the few minority groups in the FSU who are able to legally immigrate. Considering deteriorating economic and social conditions, being married to a Jew or having at least one living Jewish family member provides an opportunity to immigrate and seek a better life. However, when Russian Jews arrive to the US, they are immediately identified simply as Russians. It may be related to a residual Cold War stereotype in the American culture of "The Russians Are Coming!" And we did come. Russian immigrants constitute 25% of American Jewry in the New York Metropolitan area. Another typical joke Soviet Jews make is "We were Jews in the Soviet Union, and we became Russians in America." In every joke, there is a kernel of truth. We are assigned a specific ethnic identity by the larger society. Just as a Haitian can become African-American and a Puerto Rican can become Hispanic to the larger US culture, every immigrant from the FSU becomes Russian. This joke may also mean that Russian Jews exchanged one minority label for another. Does one continue to explain the details about being Jewish or Ukrainian or Azeri, or just conform to the label so as to make one's life easier?

After I immigrated, I found I had to explain to others what it means to be Jewish in the FSU so often that if I had been keeping track, I quickly would have lost count. Even by writing this document now, once again I am explaining to an outsider the meaning of being Jewish in the FSU culture. I wonder about the effect of such reiteration on one's sense of identity. White (1998) sees the process of telling and re-telling of one's story to an audience and by the audience as remaking of identity. The story becomes richer. On one level, I want to be known by others without having to explain myself. On another

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

level, when I explain, I begin to be aware of possible other meanings. Is there a different way to be Jewish? What are the subtle nuances of being Jewish?

Immigrants have to reconcile their notion of what it means to be Jewish with the American Jewish community telling them "you are not Jewish enough because you do not want to be observant." I remember feeling pressured during the first months in the US to become more religious and to become a part of the American Jewish community. On one hand, we were surrounded by many Jews who were openly Jewish, since we happened to "land" in an area of Baltimore highly populated by Jews. Therefore, one might assume that a refugee from the FSU, who was persecuted for being Jewish, would be happy to be in this environment. It is possible that some people are. On the other hand, most Russian-Jewish immigrants have no knowledge about Judaism or the American Jewish community. I was confused. Why did I feel that I was expected to learn about Judaism? It is possible that my perception of such expectations is real (Markowitz, 1988). The American Jewish community does strongly encourage enrollment of Russian children in religious schools. I have heard stories about these children coming home after a week of classes and starting to keep kosher, tormenting their ignorant parents about Jewish laws, wanting to go to Israel to study, and praying. Alternatively, I may have been creating this expectation in my mind because of a sense of obligation to the Jewish community who helped us. Of course, there is also a natural desire for an immigrant to belong to a community. However, becoming a part of the American Jewish community requires more than simply attending services at a synagogue. Religious rituals in this community represent both spirituality and a means of maintaining connections and relationships.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Anthropologist Fran Markowitz (1988) studied how Russian Jews in Brooklyn react to the gap between their self-identity as Jews and the American Jewish perception of them as "dejudaized" Russians. As discussed earlier, being Jewish for Russians is a self-evident, unquestioned fact which results in discrimination within the wider society and extended kinship rights and obligations within the group. According to Markowitz, for adult American Jews, however, being Jewish is a voluntary social identity and is highly dependent on knowledge of Judaism, display of this knowledge and participation in Jewish organizations. The gap between these two views leads to mutual misunderstanding, disappointment, and resentment. Defining the result of this gap as "immigrants' identity confusion," Markowitz found that most Russians began to show movement toward Americans' understanding of Jewishness (e.g., wearing Jewish symbols to display their identity around their necks, closing their businesses on Jewish holidays, increased synagogue attendance, having Jewish ceremonies for their children, or joining Jewish community centers). However, they also build some "Russian" institutions of social life that parallel American ones. She concludes that Russian Jews maintain their cognitive premise that Jews are a people and not a religion, while incorporating some religious signs and symbols, defined by American Jews, into their Jewish repertoire. However, the gap in perceptions remains unresolved.

Almost fifteen years later, Kliger and Carnes (2000) also found that the longer Russian Jews lived in America, the stronger their sense of belonging to the Jewish nation, Jewish identity, and Jewish religious affiliation has become. Compared to 63% of the "Freshman" group (1-3 years in the US), 79% of the "Seniors" (9 years or more) stated that being Jewish was important to them. 23% more "seniors" said that Judaism was an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attractive religion for them. Again, it is not made clear why this is the case. Is it related to feeling more comfortable in the American Jewish community? And if so, how did that happen? We also do not know about their "journeys." Has it been a linear progression or one with ebb and flow? And what about those whose feelings had not changed? Since the study does not explore the question of "how" Jewish identity changed, we do not know if it parallels Markowitz' suggestion about a kind of "behavioral" Jewish acculturation without engaging more affective or cognitive domains. All these questions remain to be answered in the present study.

Like Jewish adolescents in Russia, or Jews in the US, immigrants have a choice of how to embrace, avoid, or ignore their Jewishness. On the other hand, they may decide not to take this opportunity to make a choice about the parameters of their Jewish identity. The real question of the study is why they make one choice versus another. I believe that this choice will parallel other choices they make in negotiating the immigration experience. For example, Boris searches for ways to integrate Russian and American parts of his life without having to compromise one or the other. He lives in an affluent American neighborhood which has a large population of Russians who have become his own Americanized Russian enclave. He only speaks Russian with Russians and English with Americans. In terms of his Jewishness, he is still searching for a way to make a similar choice, to be Jewish in a way that would accommodate his world view and current needs. Thanks to American pluralism within Judaism, he can actually find it.

Immigration provides an opportunity for Russian Jews to reflect on the meaning of being Jewish, learn about Jewish history and heritage, and express their Jewish identity in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a new way. Here is how Boris relates his thoughts about his feelings concerning Jewishness at different points during his life in the US:

> Well, when I came out of Russia and I started studying all these things, I, I. . . all of a sudden there was a wealth of literature about the religion and about Jewish history, and um, you know it's -- the transition from one, the exodus is like a conn- - a sort of topic of Jewish life that never ceases to be there, and, um, I sort of felt a very strong connection, and I still do to a large extent, and that's why, you know, I celebrate Passover. Uhh. . every year, with great zeal, but -- at some point you just realize that -- like going to the synagogue and spending three hours every Saturday, chanting the same prayers and saying the same things over and over, uhmm . . . it's just not something I want to do. (Interview 3)

For Boris, the holiday of Passover (or Pesach) and the story behind it is meaningful because of his experience of immigration. The primary observances of Pesach are related to the Exodus of Jews from Egypt after generations of slavery. It is a story of liberation, survival, and victory. Boris relates to the transitional aspect of it. "I am not alone, I belong to a historical community that also struggled and survived."

Moreover, major life transitions, such as weddings, funerals, and the birth of a child force one to confront one's own notions of Jewish identity. As I prepared for my marriage, I had to learn about the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony and decide if I wanted to embrace those traditions, face some inevitable conflicts around them, and how to find my own way through the complexities of Jewishness. What was important for me? What was important for mine and my husband's family? How much was I willing to compromise? As much as I needed to explore the past through learning about traditions, I was also looking into the future. What did I want to pass down to my children? We were fortunate to find a Reconstructionist rabbi, who was flexible and understanding, and who helped us navigate this journey. However, I also have attended weddings of my friends where Judaism became a formality, and at times even a joke. During one of my friends'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

wedding, I was surprised to see that he agreed to participate in a religious ceremony. He was an atheist artist who I did not even know was Jewish. As he stood under the Chuppah, he clearly was there to enjoy himself and to entertain his friends. When asked by the Rabbi to repeat the Hebrew text after him, my friend was resistant, asking "What was that? What am I saying?" Many of his young friends in the room laughed. Was he forced to do this by his future wife and now decided to be passive-aggressive? Was there some type of internal conflict and discomfort that led him to use humor to cope with it? Or did he just believe all of this to be nonsense (including the wedding itself)?

Sometimes the decisions related to rites of passage and Jewish rituals are made consciously. Sometimes Russian Jews simply follow what is told to them. And sometimes they do that consciously. I believe there are several things that make a difference: the saliency and the meaning of one's Jewishness, the quality of the person's relationships with family members ("Can I go against you and still maintain the relationship?" or "Because I love you, I will do this for you"), and the availability of resources. The impact of these Jewish rites of passage is not only in the decision making process, but in the experience itself. As I stood under the Chuppah, surrounded by family and friends, looking at my life partner, and listening to our Rabbi's melodic voice talking about the Jewish meaning of marriage and the ceremony, I was overwhelmed by emotions. As I am writing this, my eyes fill with tears and I can almost hear the Hora played by my aunt or can almost see us being raised on chairs during a common Jewish dance. There is no question that my positive affective state is now in some way connected for me to things Jewish.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

One might say that Russian Jews are faced with another dualistic mental set when they immigrate. In addition to Jewishness as a source of internal conflict, they must also deal with the notion of Russianness. However, judging from my own experience and from my interview with Boris, this duality may only seem conflictual or contradictory. "I am a Russian Jew" implies an interrelationship between the two. For example, when Boris was talking about visiting Brighton Beach, he said:

> I like going to Brighton Beach, as opposed to many people I know. (Tell me more about that.) Well, I just don't go there often, that's the key. So I really enjoy my trips there and I get a reality check, mm, maybe some clerk will scream at me and call me names, whatever. Soviet service. Um-- I mean, I generally don't run into people I don't know. That much. It's all either my family or friends; it's a fairly wide circle of them, but uh, I go to Russian restaurants about once a year, maybe twice. I like doing that just because I do that so seldom. (Interview 2)

> Oh, I like ... I like seeing my community prosper even as it is. It's a very ... it's a very lively place. It's a juicy place. It's a, uh, it's a place where you meet all kinds of characters. It's like going to Greenwich Village, to an extent, it's a little bit different, but people go to Greenwich Village to do people watching, and you can do the same thing in Brighton Beach. And um, it's really lively, it's really a lot of interesting stuff going on there. Of course you never can find parking. So that part I hate, and that's why I don't go that often. And I don't have any friends living there, too. (Interview 2)

> "Of course there's some parallels, like in Brighton Beach, which really make the worst of both worlds. (Interview 3)

"I like seeing my community prosper" implies belonging to this community. At the same time, he also spoke about belonging to a Jewish community, a Jewish culture. Yet, if we listen more carefully, we can still hear an underlying conflict: he likes going there, but only goes rarely. It is his "community," but he does not have any friends or family there. How does he deal with it? He regulates the amount of contact he has with parts of the Russian community he does not like. Again, I see parallels between the mechanisms or strategies he uses to express who he is in different parts of his life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In sum, Jewish identity is a complex concept with multiple meanings. It can be experienced as conflicted and confusing. While current literature reflects existence of subjective, behavioral, cultural and religious dimensions of Jewishness, research studies often use unidimensional definitions. There is also a lack of research addressing the development of Jewish identity over time and in the context of one's personal identity. The question of how the Jewishness of Russian immigrants is affected by immigration experience remains. Whether one becomes more observant, more openly expresses pride in being a Jew, or rejects or becomes indifferent toward it, immigration has an impact on Jewish identity.

### I. 3 The Crossroads of Identity and Immigration

Where is the intersection of immigration experience and identity? Do you remember the first time you moved to another home or another city? What was it like? Do you remember the feeling of trepidation and anxiety (Can I really do this? What awaits me there? This is not home! What am I doing here?) and simultaneous excitement (Look at this! We did not have this...)? How about having now to tell people where you come from? Now, imagine arriving in another country, not understanding or speaking the language, seeing unfamiliar landscape, hearing unfamiliar sounds, and feeling completely out of place. Of the major events in a person's life, immigration is high on the list of significant life events according to its impact. I quoted Eva Hoffman in my introduction who stated: "Pattern is the soil of significance; and it is surely one of the hazards of emigration, and exile, and extreme mobility, that one is uprooted from that soil." How one deals with and negotiates such uprootedness is the focus of this study. Before I

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

address the literature on immigration, how one negotiates this experience, and its impact on one's identity, I will briefly discuss the concept of identity.

Identity and Its Development

In general, the concepts of self and identity received much theoretical and research attention in various fields of psychology, such as psychoanalysis (Akhtar, 1999; Erikson, 1950; Jacobson, 1964; Kernberg, 1975; Marcia, 1980), social psychology (Hoyle et al., 1999), developmental psychology (Mahler, 1975; Stern, 1985), and personality psychology (McAdams, 1993). While some authors focused on the individual, internal sense of identity and how it is formed, other paid more attention to interpersonal and social aspects of identity and its formation in the social context. While some distinguish between self and identity, others use them interchangeably.

As I listen to Boris and read his narrative, I am trying to understand who he is, how he thinks about himself, and to understand the strategies or mechanisms that he is employing to present himself to me in a way that would most closely correspond to his identity. Without understanding his identity I cannot approach the goals of exploring how he negotiates his immigration experience. For this task, my starting theoretical point is Erikson's concepts of personal identity, ego identity, and psychosocial identity (1959; 1987). It was Erikson who brought attention to the concept of identity in the 1950s and elaborated its meaning and components. In spite of his many volumes written to refine the concept of identity, Erikson's language is imprecise and metaphorical, reflecting the complexity of the concept as he understood it. Following William James, Erikson wrote about an experience every one of us had, an "in-between state" when we feel at one with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

what we are doing, when we feel "most ourselves." What underlies this subjective sense can be recognized by others, even if it is not especially conscious. This subjective experience is never gained or maintained once and for all. It is constantly lost and regained. One of our tasks as clinicians is to help our patients to gain this sense and experience it more often. *Personal identity* includes a subjective sense of continuous existence and a coherent memory. *Ego identity* is then a conscious awareness of having a personal identity. *Psychosocial identity* is at once subjective and objective, individual and social.

> Ego identity concerns more than the mere fact of existence, as conveyed by personal identity; it is the ego quality of this existence. Ego identity, then, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there is a selfsameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods and that these methods are effective in safeguarding the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others. (1959, p. 22)

Erikson emphasized that the term ego identity refers to a mutual relation between a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others. What is implicit in this definition is a sense of agency ("effective methods"). Some see agency as the degree to which an action is seen as one's own with oneself as its source. It is "the feeling of being in charge of constructing one's identity, of being responsible for who one is, and of being committed to one's choices" (Blasi, 1988, pp. 233-234). According to Erikson, agency does not necessarily mean change or action. You can either actively flee or actively stay put. It is an inner sense of initiative. The opposite of agency is "a state of being exposed from within or from without to superior forces which cannot be overcome without prolonged patience or energetic and redeeming help" (Erikson, 1964, p. 87). To return to William James, who distinguished between two

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

aspects of self, object and subject, agency is seen as the latter. While self as an object refers to that part of ourselves that states, "I am," self as a subject is the self who "does." In this definition, agency refers to the "methods" involved in expressing one's sense of "I am," as well as in protecting that sense. Considering the immense change an immigrant experiences, this definition which addresses the sense of sameness and continuity, as well as the methods employed to preserve it, is a vital part of understanding my participants' identity.

To consider Boris' narrative, on the conscious level he is aware of having certain characteristics (being a laid back person, organized, determined, focused, someone who values stability), playing certain roles (father, husband, son, programmer, economist), belonging to a group (Russian Jews), and having a certain historical background (FSU, Jewish roots). All of these were clear to me. In some instances he did not name an aspect of himself, but acknowledged it when I suggested it (e.g., importance of stability). This is the view within that he presents to me and that I can see. There are, however, aspects of his identity he is not aware of. Both his narrative and his interactions with me pointed to his need for control (rescheduling and regulating our meetings, regulating the amount he disclosed, and editing what is said). His own view of our first interview is a good example:

> Hmm. . .it is sometimes difficult to recollect the things that were done many years ago when, um, questions are being thrust upon you fairly unexpectedly, when you're being plucked out of your daily routine and, um, just. . . you know, forced to, um, switch your attention span from one problem to another, which is completely different from what you are thinking, generally, at work, so. . . it was sort of a little bit difficult last time. (Interview 2)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Boris states that questions were being "thrust upon you unexpectedly," he was being "plucked out" of his daily routine, "forced" to switch his attention span. No wonder he rescheduled three times before the next interview. The metaphor of a "wolf pack" he used can also be seen as his identifying with a group which has power and control. Someone else may have described the group as a "herd." When he talks about things he missed the most when he immigrated, it is about "knowing": "At first I missed very much knowing my surroundings and knowing where I was going, knowing how to handle myself, umm... but that went away quite quickly, I would say" (interview2). In this context, how do we understand the fact that Boris described his decision to emigrate as "going along" with other emigrating Jews? Is his overemphasis on control a way to cope with the sense of not having control?

Other unconscious aspects of Boris' identity have to do with the strategies, or methods according to Erikson, which he uses. These methods refer to ego defenses, such as splitting, repression, denial, and rationalization[7]. The major defense used by Boris is splitting. On a number of occasions Boris split off parts of himself or his experience that were painful, negative, conflictual. The quote about "knowing" is a good example of this process. He could not really expand on the question about feelings or difficulties of immigration. It is almost as if he needed to "contain" them, to put them into a separate box in order to deal with them. After going back to Ukraine, he almost physically "cut himself off" from that experience by deciding not to write or call his friends or ever return to the FSU. Linguistically, his efforts to "contain" were evident in his tendency to "wrap"

[7] Traditionally, defenses are described in the psychoanalytic literature in terms of their adaptive or maladaptive qualities. In the present study I am referring to defenses used by all of us in our daily lives. It does not necessarily imply psychopathology.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

his discourse. "Wrapping" may be defined as habitual, frequent gestures of verbal closure (Dion, personal communication): "that's the story," "I somehow did it," "so, that's pretty much it." Another linguistic example of splitting is his refusal to speak English with me outside of the interview process.

I used Boris' narrative to demonstrate how identity is conceptualized and how I will approach it in this study. In order to understand how one negotiates immigration experience and how immigration impacts one's identity, I will briefly address the question of identity formation and development. Akhtar (1999) compares identity development to the growth of a tree: rings accumulate around a central core without changing the shape that remains recognizable over the years. When asked about personal change, Boris said that he did not change, but then spoke about "growing up," or becoming more organized and focused. Similar to authors presented above, Erikson sees human growth and development from the point of view of resolution of inner and outer conflicts. He believes that a man feels uprooted on every step of his development as a distinctive person (Erikson, 1964). It starts when an infant learns to recognize a familiar face, only to see an unfamiliar one in the next moment: a strange face, an unresponsive face, or a frowning one. He does not recognize and does not feel recognized. Erikson calls this experience the "first uprootedness." As the child develops, he inevitably experiences the moments of disapproval and shaming by those around him, whose eyes were seeing him and approving his autonomy only a moment ago. This is his "second uprootedness," the awareness of an exposed self by which he becomes an outsider to himself. From that point, a person is never fully himself and never fully "them." These inner divisions continue as the child develops conscience, which can provide both a sense of definition and of clarity and of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"bad consciousness," inner judgment and inhibition. This sense of uprootedness, moments of not knowing or not feeling known, continues throughout one's life. Erikson states that this sense is often re-experienced during immigration.

The resolution of inner conflicts leads to an increased sense of inner unity, good judgment, and capacity to do well, according to the standards of those who are significant to him.[8] For Boris, doing well appears to be related to his wife's vision of him: achieving, energetic, successful. However, I wondered whether he is also sacrificing his own vision for himself, one vision was to be an academician and teach economics. Immigration may bring forward inner conflicts from an earlier age and present an opportunity to rework them. Let me now review the literature on this subject and explore how it may present itself in the narratives of my participants.

Immigration as trauma

Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) were the first to address the issue of immigration from a psychoanalytic perspective. They view migration as trauma and crisis. From the point of psychoanalysis, *trauma* means any violent shock and its consequences to the personality. For example, they describe several reactions an immigrant may have upon arrival, including mania, depression, paranoia, confusion, nostalgia, isolation, and apathy. Splitting between the old and the new is typical and can occur in both directions, with idealization of the new and contempt for the old, or vice versa. Grinberg and Grinberg do not elaborate on how immigration constitutes trauma, except to say that it is characterized by the feeling of helplessness. They see migration as a "catastrophic change" because

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

certain structures are exchanged for others and the changes entail periods of disorganization, pain, and frustration. Many others agree with them (de Vryer, 1989; Levy-Warren, 1987; Yaglom, 1993). de Vryer (1989) uses the concept of "culture shock"[9]: the result of a sudden change of an "average expectable environment" (Hartmann, 1959) to an unpredictable and strange one. Like Grinberg and Grinberg, de Vryer does not explain what makes this encounter "violent." Analyzing my own experience of immigration I spoke about its difficulty, challenge, or stress. Most psychoanalytic literature on immigration is written by immigrant analysts treating immigrant patients. I believe that the perspective of immigration as trauma arises from the analysts' experience with patients who suffer serious emotional distress. The present study will challenge this perspective.

Immigration process: affective experiences and stages of adjustment

Grinberg and Grinberg point out that immigration starts before one sets foot on the foreign ground. Pre-immigration factors, such as how the decision was made, whether immigration was forced or voluntary, and prior psychological difficulties or personality dimensions, influence one's experience of immigration. For example, those who were forced to immigrate and cannot go back may experience less nostalgia, but at the same time may feel bitterness toward their native country. In contrast, those who seek a better life and new opportunities may have an easier time adapting. Immigrants who have unresolved issues around individuation may have more difficulty separating from native

---

[8] Erikson acknowledges that "to do well" is a culturally relative term.
[9] This concept was first introduced by Garza-Guerrero (1974).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

culture and adjusting to the new one. In terms of personality variables, they suggest that people who enjoy the possibility of being in an unfamiliar place and forming new relationships will adjust in a different way from those who need to be in constant contact with familiar places and people. I can see this difference in my own family and among my friends. Some of them settle in Russian neighborhoods, spend much time with other Russian immigrants, and continue having the same food for lunch they had in Russia. Others venture out, love trying new foods, enjoy having new experiences.

In a study investigating the relationship between personality variables and acculturation, it was found that immigrants who engage in more "Americanized" types of behavior and who feel competent in their use of English tended to be those who view themselves as conscientious, competent, achievement-oriented, assertive, trusting of others, relatively self-sacrificing, and low in anger and modesty (Simakhodskaya, 2000).

The finding that conscientiousness, competency, and achievement striving had the strongest correlations with American behaviors and American identity is not surprising. Conscientious individuals are generally described as purposeful, strong-willed, determined, organized, and reliable. Competent people feel capable, sensible, prudent, effective, and well-prepared to deal with life. Individuals who score high on the achievement-striving facet have high aspiration levels and work hard to achieve their goals. Immigrants who possess these qualities are more likely to feel comfortable acquiring a new language and culture. Those individuals who reported the highest levels of English language competency described themselves as assertive and low in modesty. One's capacity to assert him or herself and to present oneself in a better light may be important qualities for acquiring English competency. Although the latter study did not find that openness to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

experience was associated with more Americanized behaviors or identity, this does not mean that Grinberg and Grinberg were mistaken in their hypothesis that people who enjoy being in an unfamiliar place and forming new relationships will adjust in a better way. While being open to novel experiences does not contribute to a significant change in behavior or identity, it may help one's adjustment to a new environment.

According to Grinberg and Grinberg (1989), prior to the move, every immigrant experiences a mixture of anxiety, sadness, pain, and nostalgia, as well as hopes and excitement:

> On one hand I was looking forward to something new, on the other hand I was deadly afraid of it; on one hand I was really glad I'm leaving that damn place, on the other hand I hated to leave it because I knew everything there, I had friends, I had to some extent established myself there. So it's a very mixed feeling. (You said scared. What were you afraid of?) Just that feeling of uncertainty, without knowing what's going to happen next, in three months, you don't know whether you're going to be able to get the education you want, the job you want, to uhh, to even have a place to live, that year, down the road. So of course it's very, very. . . unusual, it's scary. And you can't come back. For one you don't have the citizenship and for another you don't have the resources even if you wanted to. So it's really, you know, hanging in the middle, without knowing and having to find your way. It was very difficult. (Interview 2)

That feeling of uncertainty and fear continues upon arrival. One way one may cope with it is by hypomania and excitement. I remember feeling overwhelmed during the first few months. There were so many things that I did "for the first time": going to a supermarket and having to choose from hundreds of products; watching television and trying to understand various dialects and slang; going to an interview with my brother in another city and having to take a subway for the first time; navigating the bureaucracy of social services and hospitals; traveling around the East Coast, going to museums, concerts, visiting relatives. As my "hypomania" subsided, I entered the time of survival.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The notion of the first few years as difficult and stressful, the "crazy routine," is familiar to any immigrant. There is an assumption among Russian immigrants that you must go through this "boot camp" before it will get better. Here is what Boris said about it:

> What probably comes to mind is the first years, when we just got here, and ummhh, it's like, everybody, or almost everybody, has to eat their bowl of shit, when they come here, without money and without language, and uhm, but uhm, I had a relatively easy adjustment period because I came when I was twenty. (Interview 1)

> Well, the bowl of shit is just really, the. . . the stress that is associated with all this stuff, when you don't have money, when you don't know what to do next, when you have on one hand too many choices but on the other hand you are limited because of the lack of money. There's not necessarily the choices you want to select out of all that universe, there's not necessarily the choices you want to have. (Interview 2)

Grinberg and Grinberg comment that during this period, an immigrant often regresses and becomes less capable, more dependent on others, childlike. In this situation any immigrant needs a trustworthy person or community who will "walk him through" those initial times. It is similar to a child learning to walk or going to school for the first time. There are many resettlement services provided for Russian immigrants in the US. However, it is interesting that Boris emphasized that what helped his family was interacting with other immigrants who shared information about resources and help. Family conflicts may occur during this period because of stress and changes in roles. As I was recounting my immigration experience, I realized that my memory of these years was very vague. Grinberg and Grinberg write about dissociation as a defense an immigrant uses to cope with the losses he has suffered. Boris' narrative revealed a similar process, as his description of those years was short and lacked much detail. Sometimes, one also uses

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

denial, such as Boris remembers the "bowl of shit," he quickly says, "but I had a relatively easy adjustment period because I came when I was twenty."

Another common process among immigrants is the splitting between the old and the new, and it can occur in both directions: idealization of the new and contempt for the old or idealization of the old and contempt for the new (Akhtar, 1995; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). I remember idealizing my more experienced American relatives, as well as my old country, while expressing a disdain for Americans during the first few months. It is interesting that when Boris refers to the same experience, he points out:

> Another interesting thing is when the Russians who come here often times say 'Oh, stupid Americans.' And um, it's, it's funny because what happens is, when you're plucked out of your intellectual surroundings in Russia and you come here, you get, you don't get to deal with intellectuals, so it's really difficult to appreciate what this country has to offer in the first place. It only, after years and years here, the realization comes of what people here have to offer and how you enter and conduct yourself in more intellectual circles. (Interview 2)

The contempt for the new ("stupid Americans") often is expressed because of the lack of interactions with the new environment. As an immigrant feels more confident in the new environment, the splitting disappears. However, similar to Soviet Jews who played by the rules, but also remained in opposition, an immigrant may try to preserve the old ways of being, while acculturating behaviorally (Birman, 1994). While many studies describe different ways of acculturating, few offer a framework that would explain why one immigrant differs from the other in ways they negotiate this experience.

Another important element of immigration described in the literature is the experience of visiting one's native country and its impact (Akhtar, 1999). It is often compared to the experience of a toddler during the separation-individuation process (Mahler et al., 1975). As the toddler frequently returns to her mother from exploring the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

world, she is reconnected and recharged to go back out there and master the world. Similarly, an immigrant needs to experience such reconnection in order to be able to move forward. I remember my visit to Ukraine three years after I immigrated. It was an emotionally difficult visit, and I came back feeling depressed and shocked. As time went by I realized that this trip had special significance for my awareness of internal changes. It represented a kind of turning point. We often experience such epiphanies in our everyday life. As I practice yoga week after week without any apparent improvement in my flexibility, I am astonished one day to realize that I can actually assume a position I never thought my body could handle. Similar to my body, my psyche undergoes subtle and small transformations that become evident when confronted with an old environment. Going back to the Ukraine is almost like facing my old self in the mirror. There is initial anxiety and disorientation. "It's not me who changed -- it's them." Then there is a gradual acceptance of the fact that I too have changed. If an immigrant cannot go back (for financial or other reasons), the reconnection happens through ethnic neighborhoods, family, media, and books. It will be important to focus on this experience during the interviews. I will examine Boris' trip back to Ukraine and its impact on him later in this chapter.

There is a number of factors that provide a kind of "psychological cushion" helping immigrants to get through the hard times. They include, but are not limited to, having a support group of people who are going or have gone through the same experience, having solid and stable ties to their families, and having a satisfying job or having positive experiences of efficacy in the new land (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989). While Boris acknowledges some of these factors (having a "rich uncle character," the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

presence of the immigrant community, having experiences of competence), he also insists on his own contribution to the process:

> (What do you think helped you through the stress?) Nothing. (So how did you do it?) Well, you are put in a situation and you can deal with it in several ways, there are better ways to do it and there are worse ways to do it, and what was I going to do? I wasn't going to become a drunkard or anything (...) so I just tried to work through the situation to somehow survive, and . . .I somehow survived! (Interview 1)

It may have something to do with the sense of agency discussed earlier. Boris' way of adapting is by controlling and mastering his environment.

While most stage models of immigration simply identify behavioral changes or variables in immigrants' adjustment (Drachman & Halberstadt, 1992), Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) focus on the internal adaptation. They distinguish three stages. At the first stage, an immigrant's dominant feelings are pain for things that are lost or left behind, fear of the unknown, sense of loneliness, need, and helplessness. After a certain period, the second stage begins. During this phase, feelings of sorrow for the lost world and a sense of nostalgia arise. An immigrant stops denying or dissociating from these painful feelings. They call it "growing pains." Being able to acknowledge it and suffer, an immigrant makes himself more accessible to incorporating the new culture. At the third stage, the immigrant rediscovers the joy of thinking, desiring, and planning for the future. The past does not interfere with living fully in the present. While authors state that the process of immigration is never complete and continues throughout one's life, they point out that resolution of one's mourning for the native country makes it easier for the immigrant to integrate his native culture into the new one without having to denounce

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

either one. One of the tasks of the present study is to see whether participants' narratives will reveal similar patterns of a stage-like process.

If an immigrant has sufficient capacity to work through this stressful experience there will be a quality of rebirth when he or she recovers, and the further development of the creative potential (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989). How does this happen? Grinberg and Grinberg state that after the initial reaction of shock (due to the sudden imbalance after the massive loss of valued objects), the ego tries to reorganize itself by gradually working through its losses. This process of mourning is long. It includes two simultaneous processes: mourning for the lost object and mourning for the lost aspects of the self. According to Grinberg and Grinberg, working through results from "a dialectical movement between regression and progression" (1989, p. 96). Regression in this instance may mean replacing the "false self" with the true self.[10] However, it is essential that a person experiences such a state as temporary. An individual has to make a psychic effort to accept losses and recover an emotional connection to reality. When this happens, an immigrant starts feeling as an integrated member of his new environment. For many authors, the goal of "integration" is essential for good mental health and a cohesive sense of identity (Akhtar, 1999; Berry & Sam, 1997). However, recently in the adaptation and adjustment literature there have been suggestions that individuals use many strategies and approaches when dealing with the acculturation process. Integration may not be suitable for everyone (Birman, 1994). How individuals make such choices is a question that remains to be answered.

---

[10] Winnicott (1955) described such regression and the concepts of "false" and "true" self.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Prior to the beginning of this study, the only research article I could find describing the potential positive impact of migration was written about Chinese foreign students in the US (Yeh, 1976). While there are many differences between this group and Russian immigrants, there is some commonality. For example, both groups experience culture shock dealing with differences in language, mannerisms and communication, climate, and suffer from status change and status loss. The author described normal aspects of such a transition, including "sticking to your own kind" as a tendency of all human beings faced with problems of cross-cultural adaptation, initial splitting between negative aspects of American culture and positive views of Chinese culture, increasing objectivity in their perceptions of Chinese and American people, and a capacity to reflect on these perceptions. Like Grinberg and Grinberg, Yeh believes that for those who successfully completed their goals of sojourn, the experiences of working through these difficulties were of a particular benefit to their psychological growth in terms of developing a more objective self-realization, better interpersonal relations with others, and greater flexibility and tolerance for change. All three may be seen as different parts of one's identity. More recently, Zaborowski (1999) conducted a study of the subjective experiences of migration among Brazilians living in Los Angeles. She concluded that "the strange and awkward 'transplantation' which takes place in a migratory process mirrors the process of human development that occurs throughout one's life" (p. 151). Zaborowski concluded that the experiences of separation and loss enable migrants to develop mastery over these feelings and promote self-confidence and enjoyment. Many subjects in her study experienced migration as a valuable opportunity to explore and transform themselves.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Immigration and Identity

Erikson wrote in "Identity and Uprootedness in Our Time" (1964) that a well-established identity is necessary to endure an experience which threatens one's identity, such as immigration. Immigrants who possess a well-integrated personal identity and group identity will adjust more easily to this upheaval. Erikson's notion of a well-integrated identity refers to a sense of wholeness.[11]

> The young person, in order to experience wholeness, must feel a progressive continuity between that which he has come to be during the long years of childhood and that which he promises to become in the anticipated future; between that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives others to see in him and to expect of him... Wholeness emphasizes a sound, organic, progressive mutuality between diversified functions and parts within an entirety, the boundaries of which are open and fluent. (1964, pp. 91-92).

Group identity refers to the person's feeling of belonging to the collective sense of identity characterizing the social groups that are significant to him: his class, his nation, his culture. Societies provide us tradition, history, and connection to the past. The group identity also gives us a sense of rootedness.

A radical change in one's environment can bring forth the earlier moments of "uprootedness." As an immigrant looks around, she does not recognize those around her, or does not feel recognized by them: "Who am I?" Immigration questions one's roles, expectations, habits, and ways expressing oneself to others. Immigration questions one's sense of continuity and sameness: will I be tomorrow who I was yesterday? For those who have continued to feel uprooted throughout their lives and were able to manage it

---

[11] Once again, Erikson uses his terms freely and interchangeably. "Wholeness," "inner identity," and "identity" refer to the same phenomenon.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

until now, immigration experience threatens this vulnerable identity. That is why some immigrants seek psychological services for the very first time upon immigrating. In terms of group identity, one's national identity is hardly thought of while one remains in the native country. However, when one moves, one's sense of national identity is heightened and may be threatened (de Vryer, 1989). Watching recent Olympics on television, I could not help but notice the emotions many athletes expressed in relation to competing for their country. Many of them did not seem to think of belonging to a nation while training or going about their business in their own country.

What is also missing in the literature is how one's pre-immigration identity influences one's experience of immigration. In Boris' case, the importance of control, splitting, need for things to be organized and contained are part of who he is independent of the experience. They affect the way he negotiates immigration.

> You know I um. . . I came pretty open minded, I did not imagine how things should be here. I did not know that. But I would say, um, America is a somewhat more organized country, and more orderly country than Russia. And um, you know that was a pleasant surprise. Things, people who. . . you know who have the, who want to pursue something? They can pretty much do that without any interference. Nobody bothers them, and ah, it's easy. So that was to some extent a surprise, to some extent exactly what I hope, what I had hoped for. (Interview 2)

> I have changed in the sense that I grew up. I became more organized, more determined, more focused but that comes with age, that doesn't come with, um, with external circumstances. But I basically I stayed the same. (Interview 2)

For Boris, growing up means being more *organized*. And it is exactly the same word he used to describe America and what he hoped for. In his approach to adaptation, he set goals, stayed on track, and accomplished them. As I interview other participants, I would

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

like to see if similar patterns of one's pre-immigration identity affecting their immigration experience emerge.

Akhtar: Four tracks in identity transformation following immigration

A useful framework to understand an immigrant's experience of immigration and its impact on identity was offered by Akhtar (1995, 1999). He was the first to apply the term *third individuation* to the process of an adult-life reorganization of identity in immigrants. He elaborates the *dimensions*, or strands, of identity along which immigrants travel and introduces the concept of "hybrid" identity among immigrants. The first strand is *drive and affect.* The immigrant travels from love or hate to ambivalence. In order to defend against psychic disorientation, an immigrant resorts to splitting of self and object representations. It refers to the way an immigrant invests and polarizes his affective alliances. What does he feel emotional connection to? Who and what brings up loving and affectionate feelings? Who and what triggers negative and hateful ones? What parts of myself do I admire and accept and what parts of myself do I reject? The two lands, old and new, and the two self-representations, old and new, become a source of conflict. One example of this conflict was mentioned above: disdain for Americans and praise for Russians. The issues of difference in clothing, manners, education, and character become heated topics of discussion. As I began adjusting and feeling somewhat more comfortable in my new environment, the reverse seemed to occur. At times I felt ashamed of my fellow Russians. What was once idealized was now devalued. It is possible that a move toward becoming more American requires some splitting and dissociation from your native group. According to Akhtar, an immigrant eventually is able to synthesize the two

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

self-representations into a hyphenated identity. At that point he or she feels positively ambivalent toward both cultures. Erikson wrote that a healthy identity is achieved by considering one's culture, particularly its ideology, and the expectations that society has for oneself, while at the same time questioning the validity of both culture and society and the appropriateness of others' perceptions and expectations. It seems that the immigrant is presented with an opportunity to do so with two cultures and two societies. It also presents a threat for those whose pre-existing vulnerabilities hinder them from resolving such conflict. One possible result of this may be marginalization: hateful feelings to both native and American lands and to both old and new self-representations.

The second track of identity change is *interpersonal and psychic space*, from near or far to optimal distance. At the external level it occurs with spatial proximity and psychological intimacy, as well as with the actual distance from the homeland. An immigrant may try to recreate the home environment to be closer to what is no longer there. Transitional objects and actions are used to bridge the two lands; including international phone calls, native food, books and memorabilia. As I noted above, when an immigrant can visit his or her home country, it provides a better opportunity to bridge the two worlds. Such trips may be emotionally difficult and affectively charged. During my own visit I actually faced the losses I experienced for the first time in three years. The shock came from the realization that the place I called home and left behind did not really exist anymore. The country had gone through significant, detrimental changes. My friends and family were still struggling to survive. Only much later did I realize that I also had changed. This trip provided an opportunity to confront my nostalgic idealization of my homeland and to make it more realistic. Boris also experienced shock when going

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

back to Ukraine. However, it did not provide him the same opportunity. He appears to be unable to reconcile the two distant worlds:

> It made me quite restless for about a year. Ah – it was a shock. It was probably the quite hugest shock I ever received in my ten years here. Make it twelve. Um – well, I went to visit my grandmother, mostly, and once at it I met some of my high school friends and the shock about it was that people who, mmm, people who were high-flight intellectuals, and they were very, very cultured and very, very proper and humnistic have become wild beasts due to the circumstances they were put into.
>
> And what was very shocking also is the realization that had I stayed there, I would have been, um, I would have been really confined to the situation where I would have two outcomes. I would either sink – um, sink down into total poverty, not being able to feed myself, or I would go into business and become just like them. The first outcome being much more likely.
>
> And when I sat down on the plane and took off for Paris, my thought was literally: "My God, I'm leaving Sodom." And it was so much of a shock that for so many years after that I never called anybody or never wrote a letter. Pretty much cut off all communications with people who stayed there.
>
> (Would you ever go back?) When my son grows up, if he's interested, I will. Just to show him. But otherwise no. (Why not?) There's nothing for me there. There's absolutely nothing that that country can offer to me. And there is nothing that I can offer to that country." (Interview 2)

At the internal level, movement occurs between an immigrant's native self-representation and the newly acquired one. I may speculate that Boris was unable to reconcile his native self-representation (or rather the potential representation of "who-he-might-have-been") and his present one. Akhtar (1999) describes several pathological outcomes stemming from an inability to navigate this track: ethnocentric withdrawal, counterphobic assimilation, pragmatic assimilation, and temporally alternating phases of closeness and distance from one or the other culture. Only a deeper restoration of optimal distance between the two self-representations will lead to a solid and healthy identity.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Whether these outcomes or such restoration become evident in the current study remains to be answered.

Akhtar compares this process to the individuation and separation process during early childhood. As a child continually moves back and forth between his mother and an outside world, he eventually establishes an "optimal distance" interpersonally, as well as intrapsychically (between his own and his mother's internal representations). According to Erikson's definition of healthy identity, the restoration of optimal distance between internal self-representations implies a sense of continuity in who the immigrant was yesterday and who he is today. There is no need to deny or split off either self-representation. Using a parallel concept, Berger (1997) describes five ways Russian adolescents deal with the issue of two self-representations: clinging, eradicating, vacillating, separating, and integrating. Similar to Akhtar, in this model integrating two self-representations is considered a healthier choice. However, both typologies were based on clinical populations. The question of how young immigrants themselves experience such shifts remains.

The third dimension is *temporality;* from yesterday or tomorrow to today. As noted above, the temporal dimension is critical for a cohesive identity. The connections between the past, present, and future help us make sense of our lives and who we are. According to Akhtar, orientation towards future is typical for exiles who cannot return home and, therefore, are full of hatred and the need to split off the old world. For others, the tremendous sense of loss may trigger nostalgia. Akhtar describes the "if only" and "someday" fantasies of lost paradise. Since the internal immigration status of Russian immigrants is more complicated, this division will not have such clear external reasons. It

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

may be more related to individual factors, including one's pre-immigration identity status. Similar to other dimensions, the movement toward the middle is considered more healthy. As an immigrant de-idealizes lost objects, he or she is more able to live a meaningful life in the present while maintaining positive ties with the past and having realistic future expectations and hopes.

Finally, the fourth dimension is *social affiliation*; a move from yours or mine to ours. Again, a recently arrived immigrant typically resorts to a "mine-versus-yours" split. Akhtar uses Winnicott's (1971) notion of transitional phenomena to say that in order for an immigrant to move toward the sense of "we" or "ours," he or she has to fill in the "transitional area" with local culture and alter the superego. It is not unusual among young Russian immigrants to go "crazy" with American freedom. The notions of right and wrong become fluid, with old ones being discarded as unneeded and the new ones not being taken seriously. There are, of course, consequences from the new notions of right and wrong. Eventually, one is able to adjust the notions of right and wrong to behave congruently within the new society. Being able to feel empathic toward Americans "facilitates the development of mutuality and deeper social affiliation" (1999, p. 97).

Akhtar's theory and description of identity transformation process speaks to a dynamic process with an optimal result. How does an immigrant accomplish this result? According to Akhtar, several things are necessary for an immigrant to achieve the optimal distance and ambivalence on the dimensions of identity transformation. First, an immigrant has to have enough experiences of efficacy in the new land, as well as a positive balance of libido over aggression. The latter refers to predominance of loving and positive feelings and experiences in one's life. In terms of the feelings of efficacy, I remember my

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

conversation with Boris after one of the interviews. He was telling me about doing some renovations in his house and how he surprised himself with all the things he could do. "I've never been a handyman, I could never put a screw in, and now I am putting in wooden floors by myself, I am painting the house, I am fixing things!" He was clearly proud of it. Boris also had many experiences of being capable and effective during his adjustment: going to college and getting into a good graduate school, getting jobs, learning the language.

How do these changes express themselves in an immigrant's life? A healthy ambivalence toward both the native country and the new one may get expressed in increasing comfort associating with Russians and Americans (e.g., having both over for dinner, having both American and Russian friends). While I could see such movement in Boris' narrative, his continued struggle is evident:

> I still don't have too many American friends, I have some, with whom we hang out, um, very good friends, too, but most of my friends, the vast majority, are Russians, and most of my American friends I either work with or studied with, or somehow, through a common thing, that went on... (A common interest...) Common interest, common problems, common situations, like for example having children the same age, umm, we, we somehow connected and we still keep in touch. (Interview 1)

Another evidence of such change in emotional investment is which athletes an immigrant roots for when watching a competition involving Russians and Americans. During 1992 Olympics, I rooted exclusively for Russians. When I was asked by someone recently about my "allegiance" during the Olympics, my first response was that I was rooting for both Americans and Russians. As I thought a little more, I realized that I had the most positive emotional response (i.e. pride, excitement, warmth) when I saw Lenny Krayzleberg win the gold medal for the US. In a way, Lenny represented myself: a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Russian immigrant who now lives in and competes for his new country. Reaching optimal distance interpersonally may be expressed in an immigrant's acceptance of the new limits of interpersonal space. I often joke with my friends that you can tell a Russian who arrived recently by how close he stands to you while talking ("in your face" or "far enough"). As Akhtar (1999) points out, internally, one reaches such distance when he feels increasingly comfortable with his native origin in the work place, as well as with using newly acquired American aspects of himself at home, and when there is an established pattern of re-connecting with the native land by international phone calls and visits. For Russian Jew who immigrated as refugees with their families and their community, it is not clear who they will be reconnecting to. The move from mine and yours to ours can be seen in the immigrant's increasing enjoyment of American movies or books, television shows and cultural events. This facilitates mutual interactions with Americans. Boris described in detail and with much positive affect how he engaged in morning discussions of the latest "90210" episode with his co-workers:

> That's um, it sort of made me relate to people much easier. It's really, you know, there's a connection, cultural connection somewhere. You're not scared to approach the cultural issues, the issues that, um, you know these people grew up with, what movies they watched, what books they read, a sort of a barrier between us and them, somehow that barrier was dissolving a little bit when I got exposure to it. (Interview 3)

Of course, this kind of movement is not possible without acquiring the new language. It is a medium through which an immigrant learns about the new world. It is a tool of communication and a vehicle of internal change. Although I studied English for a year and a half before I immigrated, I still remember the panic I felt when I could not understand what was said to me. I felt awkward and unintelligent when I spoke English. I

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was ashamed of my accent and was certain that people were making fun of it. At the same time, I was enjoying "practicing" my newly acquired English slang, in spite of obvious mistakes I was making. Yet, it took me a long time to be able to use American idioms appropriately, to understand certain jokes, and to have a more emotionally charged reaction to English obscenities. According to Akhtar, there are a couple of linguistic signs of identity transformation: increasing dominance of English appearing in spontaneous humor and dreams and treating obscenities and the terms of genitals in English with an instinctual and moral evaluation similar to those of the native language. Of course, the ability to learn English would vary among individuals. Does the linguistic ability affect how an immigrant can progress along the dimensions suggested by Akhtar? Or is it a matter of how one perceives and deals with her linguistic limitations? I know people who speak English with a thick accent, yet do not find it embarrassing or limiting in their interactions with Americans. On the other hand, I also know Russians who speak perfect English, but do not have American friends and appear to belong to one end of the continuum (Russian versus American). What about the use of "Ruglish" - a combination of Russian and English? Here is what Boris says about it:

> You tend to twist in the American words or expressions, when they sound better than in Russian. Then again, when you are conversing with Russians in English, you tend to squeeze in some Russian expressions that are juicier. So, in the end you take the best of both worlds, and, you know, merge them together the best way you can. (Interview 3)

While the issue of language is fascinating and rich, it is beyond the scope of this study to explore it. The reader can refer to one of currently most comprehensive works on the issue of multi-lingualism by Amati-Mehler and her co-authors (1993). However, the questions about the use of Russian, English, and Ruglish as it relates to one's identity, as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

well as the participants' choice of language to tell their story or switching languages within the story, will be important for the present study.

Akhtar (1999) acknowledges that the dimensions he suggested are not independent of each other, that there may be other dimensions along which immigrants move that are not yet recognized, and that the identity change of immigration continues throughout the life span. He was also not convinced that the result of the separation process is a solid hybrid entity. It is possible that the new identity that emerges is a flexible set of several self-representations which functions differently in different contexts and continues to develop. I would also argue that there is no *new* identity or that there is no *transformation* of identity, but rather continued identity development and growth influenced by immigration. As Boris pointed out in response to my questions:

> I have changed in the sense that I grew up. I became more organized, more determined, more focused but that comes with age, that doesn't come with, um, with external circumstances. But I basically I stayed the same.
>
> Well, ninety-five percent of the people in this world live within a hundred miles of the place they were born. So, immigration was a decision, a tough decision, and the path from there to here was a tough path. And going through that path, surviving it and surviving it successfully, is, um, is sort of a thing that puts everybody who made it into somewhat different league it's um, it sort of proves to you that, you know, that you can do more than generally is expected of you. That you really can face it and really you can, you know, can succeed. (Interview 2)

What Boris is referring to is his sense of sameness and continuity, as well as developmental change. Now I would like to address the issues of development and life transitions as related to immigration experience.

<u>The Kleinian notion of developmental positions as it relates to the immigration experience</u>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Akhtar (1999) referred several times to Klein's concepts of paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions and their relationship to movement along identity dimensions. I will briefly describe these concepts, as well as provide more current views by contemporary psychoanalysts on the relationship between the two positions. While Klein first developed the notion of the depressive position (1935) and only later conceptualized the paranoid-schizoid position (1946), her final developmental theory postulates that an infant moves from paranoid-schizoid to depressive positions. Although the language she uses is one of pathology, Klein emphasized that these concepts are of "vital importance for normal development as well as for abnormal object-relations" (1946, p. 9). The paranoid-schizoid position can be described as dominated by paranoid anxiety and splitting processes. An infant has to split the "bad" and the "good" internal objects in order to dispose of the annihilating anxiety. "The bad object is not only kept apart from the good one but its very existence is denied, as is the whole situation of frustration and the bad feeling (pain) to which frustration gives rise. This is bound up with denial of psychic reality" (1946, p. 7). The world is seen in black-and-white terms: the self is regarded as a victim of the externalized persecutor. As an infant is able to introject the complete objects, the loved and hated aspects of the mother are no longer separate, or split. Therefore, an infant experiences a fear of loss and a sense of guilt (as the aggressive impulses are directed towards the mother). This marks the movement to the depressive position. This position is characterized by ambivalence, capacity for empathy, sadness and guilt.

One of the reasons Klein chose the notion of positions, rather than stages, to describe these concepts was that the phenomenon she was describing was not a passing phase, but rather a specific configuration of object relations, anxieties, and defenses which

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

persist throughout a person's life (Klein, 1935; Segal, 1973). The psychoanalytic literature typically regards the depressive position as a healthier set of object relations. However, there is also a view that the certainty and security of paranoid-schizoid states of mind (of having bad objects outside and good objects inside) is a kind of innocence that is lost in the depressive position (Gould, 1999). This loss is the basis for the development of symbol formation, impulse control, and the ability to contain complex and negative emotional states. The contemporary thought on the Kleinian positions indicates that there is a process of oscillation between the two positions that is a part of a normal developmental process (Britton, 1998, cited in Gould, 1999). It is also believed that in some instances the state of the depressive position and defenses involved in it can actually interfere with healthy functioning. For example, feelings of ambivalence and the capacity for compassion, if not managed properly, would hinder a leader's ability to make difficult or unpopular decisions. At the same time, chronic fear of persecution by powerful enemies would engender in a leader paranoia and suspicion towards those who disagree. Feelings of love, patriotism, and passion can be seen as the characteristics of the paranoid-schizoid position as they require the splitting between the "good" and the "bad" (Gould, 1999).

How does this apply to the immigration process? One's ability to use the defenses of the paranoid-schizoid position (splitting and projection) is necessary to focus on the task of learning the new environment and managing the anxiety of the new world. Yet, at a different point, an inability to integrate positive and negative feelings about an experience would impede one's relationships. For example, Boris' need to cut off all ties with Ukraine after his trip speak to his inability to contain both the positive aspects of his

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Russian background and his negative experiences of the trip. Whether other participants will experience shifts between paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, or would represent a particular defensive style associated with one of the them, remains to be answered.

Birman's model of acculturation styles

I mentioned this model earlier in this manuscript and would now like to offer a more detailed description. Birman (1994) based this model on the traditional theories of acculturation which were unidimensional, i.e. an immigrant is acculturated either in the new culture or the old culture, with the implied focus on being more Americanized (Berry & Sam, 1997). In contrast, her model is multidimensional in nature, includes acculturation to two cultures and distinguishes between behavioral and identity components of this process. She first presents the acculturation styles of assimilation, separation, and marginality. Assimilation is characterized by high involvement in both identity and behavior in the majority culture and low involvement in one's culture of origin. Separation is characterized by the opposite, high involvement in both identity and behavior in the culture of origin and low involvement in the majority culture. Low involvement in both cultures with respect to identity and behavior represents marginality. However, Birman's focus is on multiple forms of biculturalism.

Birman suggests four types of biculturalism: blended, instrumental, integrated, and identity exploration. *Blended biculturals* are highly identified with both cultures and participate behaviorally in both, presenting a kind of fusion of the two. This experience gives the person a sense of belonging to a community of other blended individuals.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Similar to blended biculturals, those adopting the *instrumental bicultural* style are involved behaviorally in both cultures, but not in their psychological sense of identity. They are likely to be torn about their sense of identity and feel like outsiders in both worlds. *Integrated biculturals* are highly involved in both cultures but have a firm sense of identity as a member of their culture of origin. Individuals who are highly involved behaviorally in the majority cultures and not their native culture, but who identify highly with their culture of origin rather than the majority culture, can be described as *exploring their culture identity* and wishing for a reconnection with their roots. Mostly likely, such individuals were raised in the majority culture and may feel quite comfortable in it, while at the same time they are beginning to discover their cultural roots.

In considering Boris' narrative, according to Birman's model, he would be identified as an integrated bicultural. He speaks fluent English, lives in a middle class, "American" neighborhood, is quite comfortable among Americans at work, and engages in typical American behaviors (watching television, reading books, going to parties). Boris is also highly involved in Russian culture: he chose his neighborhood in part because of the presence of other Russian-speaking immigrants, he speaks Russian at home and with friends, reads books in Russian, watches Russian movies. Yet, he strongly identifies as a Russian. Where this typology becomes confusing is in terms of Boris' relationship to Americans. According to Birman, that would be defined as "behavioral participation." Boris' description of his difficulty establishing intimate relationships with Americans appears to be more related to his internal identity struggle than to his level of comfort in interacting with them.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Birman acknowledges that this typology is not absolute and that the specific cultural, community, family, and other circumstances in which individuals live may interact with the individual acculturation styles to create an even greater diversity of patterns. The qualitative nature of the present study allows a closer look at such diverse patterns.

Immigration as a Life Transition

Immigration may be seen as one of many life transitions. In terms of normal life stages, most of the literature has been devoted to transitions of adolescence and mid-life (Blos, 1979; Cytrynbaum et al., 1980; Erikson, 1959, 1968; Jaques, 1980; Pickens, 1994). However, transitions are involved in switching careers (Clausen, 1995), becoming a parent (Clausen, 1995; Pickens, 1994; Pine, 1982), moving from high school to college (Smith, 1990), and retirement (Grove et al., 1997), among many others. While many of these transitions are positive in nature, people typically cringe at the notion of change and transition. It is a challenge that can be both traumatic and rewarding. These experiences are also referred to as *turning points* by many authors (Clausen, 1995; Strauss, 1959). They are "points in development when an individual has to take stock, to re-evaluate, revise, resee, and rejudge" (Strauss, 1959, p. 92). The present study focuses specifically on the transition of immigration. It is a transition that is, in a way, imposed upon a person. Nobody grows up expecting to emigrate. It is a transition that involves a major change in the environment, both in terms of people and inanimate objects. And for Russian immigrants, nobody chooses at what "developmental stage" to immigrate.

In the context of his stage model of adult development, Levinson (1978; Levinson et al., 1986) describes many life transitions along the way: Early Adult Transition (17 to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

22), Age 30 Transition (28 to 33), Midlife Transition (40-45), Age 50 Transition (50-55), and Late Adult Transition (60-65). Each transitional period terminates the existing life structure and creates the possibility of a new one. The primary task of each transitional stage is to re-evaluate the existing life structure, to explore the possibilities for change in the world and in the self, and to move toward a commitment to the important choices. These crucial choices, their meaning and required commitment, are the major products of each transition. Although transitions tend to be experienced as stressful, disruptive, or emotionally painful, they offer an opportunity for growth and development. Those who manage earlier transitions well are better prepared for later life tasks.

One of the questions for the present study is how the developmental period at the time of immigration impacted their narrative of immigration experience. For Russian Jews, this transition is not only about forming a place in an adult world, but also forming this place in a new society. Does it make it more difficult or easier? During my interview with Boris, he brought up this issue himself:

> (How would you describe yourself as a person at that initial period?) Well, I was a person who just came out of his teenage years, very lost, I would say, the two words that describe it. Very lost. And umm. . . that's pretty much it. (In what ways, lost?) In every way. Like, what to do, why to do it? Am I doing the right thing? Umm, should I be doing that thing? Should I be doing something else? All these questions were popping up, it was basically. . . otherwise I was a fairly common type character hanging out with friends and going to school, doing what all the other kids were doing. Except probably if I was born here or came here at eleven I would have better financial background to enjoy my life much more than I did. You know, travel a little bit, and stuff like that. (Interview 1)

Feelings of "being at loss" characterizes both the developmental transition from adolescence into early adulthood and the transition of immigration. At this point, I am not sure that it is possible to disentangle these two. According to Levinson, Age 30

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Transition is a time when people either make new choices with regard to occupation, relationship, and life style or reaffirm the choices they have made up until that point. For Boris, it appears to involve the decision about his career: making a change towards his passion for economics versus staying with programming, re-affirming the current compromise of full-time programming and part-time economics, or looking for something that would involve both. During the interviews, he first denied his passion for economics, then sort of acknowledged it, then was able to talk about it in a meaningful way. Once again, we can see how he approaches this task using the same strategies that he used in negotiating the immigration experience: denial, splitting, and possible reconciliation.

In his essay on the experience of self, Pine (1982) writes about the process of the expansion of the self. It is a process by which new events and new behaviors begin to be experienced as parts of the self. He calls this process *metabolization* of new behaviors. "Psychological 'foreign bodies' too can thus be metabolized, worked over, 'characterologically stabilized,' until they become familiar, part of the experiential self" (1982, p. 161). Pine emphasizes the role of repetition in this process. We gain mastery through repetition. Pine also uses the term "characterological shaping," offered by Blos, which refers to the process by which our attitude toward the new phenomena, our feelings and actions toward it express our general mode of functioning. I discussed earlier how Boris approaches his immigration experience in a way that is consistent with who he is, congruous with his identity.

As you can see, the perspective of immigration as a transition supports and complements the literature on identity development, immigration, and how it is experienced. Like any transition, immigration provides opportunity to re-evaluate one's

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

life and either make changes or reaffirm one's past choices. When changes are made, it is a gradual process that involves using one's existing resources and strategies. What it means for the present study is that the change is not always acknowledged, or is rather seen as part of a normal, developmental process. In addition, it is vital for me to be aware of the developmental context among my participants. Immigration did not happen in a vacuum, it transpired at a certain time in their lives and continues to affect their lives in the present stage of their development.

In sum, identity is a complex concept. The present study uses Erikson's definitions of identity based on psychoanalytic theory. This definition allows one to examine not only one's subjective feeling of sameness and continuity, but also one's own relationship to self. While many authors focus on traumatic aspects of immigration, I believe that immigration is a challenge. It is a challenge that affects one's identity. Yet immigration is also affected by one's pre-immigration identity. The present study will explore the character of this interplay in the narratives of Russian Jews.

The issues of immigration, identity, and Jewishness received much attention in the literature. Their complexity contributes to the difficulties experienced by researchers in studying these concepts and processes. Using Erikson's understanding of identity, I sought to demonstrate how one can understand an immigrant's identity and use this understanding to explore the relationship between immigration and identity. I view immigration as a challenge to one's sense of self. It is a dramatic change in one's environment that has often been viewed as traumatic in psychoanalytic and research literature. Little research has been conducted in addressing the potential positive impact of this challenge. This study attempts to fill this gap.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Russian Jews are often considered a "successful" immigrant group. It refers to their financial and educational achievements, as well as high levels of acculturation to American society. Yet there is little research that explored the normative development of young adult Russian Jews. Literature and research on their Jewish identity reflects the multiple meanings of Jewishness and its complexity. On one hand, Russian Jews grew up in the FSU with Jewish identity being defined by the state, they experienced discrimination, and struggled to survive and succeed. On the other hand, they also posses a strong sense of belonging to Jewish community, being proud of their Jewishness, and identify with cultural and ethnic components of it. Immigration to the US affects how they understand their Jewishness, how they relate to it, and how they express it.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Chapter 2

# Methodology

In this chapter, I will explain the choice of participants and the method of their selection for this study. Next, the theory and justification behind qualitative methodology used in the current study will be discussed. It will be followed by the description of the interview instrument and its development, as well as the procedure of interviewing. I will then describe the techniques for data analysis that will be used in this study.

## 2.1 Participants

The participants of this study are young adult Russian Jewish immigrants. Ten to twelve participants between ages of 25 and 35, who arrived in the US at age 18 or older, and who have lived in the US from 7 to 10 years, will be interviewed. These participants represent the fourth wave of immigration from the FSU. Having lived in the US for several years allows them to reflect on their experiences of immigration and personal change. The study will include men and women. Since one of the study goals is to understand and define Jewishness for this population, the criteria for inclusion in the study will be broad (Horowitz, 2000). Any Russian immigrant who defines himself or herself as Jewish or who had at least one Jewish parent can be included in the study. For participants who do not define themselves as Jewish, I will focus on their relationship with the Jewish parent, the history of their upbringing, and their understanding of their "non-Jewishness." Due to the small sample size, I will limit the participants to those from the Russian language dominated Western European areas of the FSU, including Russia,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.[12] They will be recruited through my social and occupational network in New York City. The snowball technique may be used if necessary. Pre-interview screening will exclude those with a history of serious mental illness to provide a normative population sample of functioning adults (Appendix A).

## 2.2 Qualitative Psychobiographical Methodology

The preponderance of research on the topic of immigration and psychological adjustment uses questionnaires and check lists derived from pre-existing theories and research. What is missing in this literature is the immigrants' relationships to their own experience. In this study I attempt to describe the experience of immigration and its impact on one's identity. Similarly, most empirical research on Jewish identity of Russian immigrants lacks a perspective on their subjective experience over time. Using a psychobiographical narrative approach allows both myself and my participants to make sense of the experience. In the last two decades this form of psychological inquiry has become increasingly popular (Gergen & Gergen, 1983; McAdams, 1993, 1995; Newton, 1995). "Biography attempts a depiction of the entire life or large portions of it and is, I shall argue, best used for raising questions, deriving empirically based ideas and concepts, and answering questions about a particular individual's life" (Newton, 1995, p. 148). In this particular study my focus will be on a period of about 10 years, the transitional period of immigration. It is impossible to examine this period in my participants' lives without

[12] Jewish immigrants from the eastern Soviet republics have a set of characteristics and experiences that would greatly complicate my investigation. For example, those who came from Uzbekistan or Dagestan have grown up in predominantly Muslim communities, are quite observant in their Judaism, generally have a darker complexion, and often settle in different neighborhoods than Russian Jews from western areas.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

placing it in the context of their life as a whole. Similarly, applying the psychobiographical method to the second question of the study (issue of Jewishness) allows us to examine Jewish identity not as an entity acquired at some point in a person's lifetime, but rather as a result of an ongoing process (Horowitz, 1998, 2000). I will ask participants about the origins of their Jewish identity, the history of traditions and customs in their families, and ways in which their Jewish identity may have changed over time.

"Stories are like containers that hold us together; they give us a sense of coherence and continuity" (Mason-Schrock, 1996, p. 176). McAdams (1993, 1995) defines identity as an internalized and evolving life story. By telling their stories in a coherent way, people try to generate meaning; they attempt to understand how their past had influenced who they are today and who they will become tomorrow. Since one of the goals of the present study is to look at the process of personal change, people's narratives provide a window onto their identity and its development.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe qualitative analysis as an interplay between researchers and data. The researcher must strike a balance between science and creativity. By science they mean maintaining a degree of rigor and grounding analysis in data, rather than relying on pre-existing theory. While the guiding methodology of this study follows the motto "Data informs the study!" (Rosen, personal communication), it also includes the use of existing theories and research in order to focus the inquiry. One may argue that it is impossible to conduct any grounded theory research free of pre-existing assumptions guided by theory or personal experiences. We can strive to be aware of our assumptions and to keep our minds open to new possibilities.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

### 2.3 Interview Protocol

The instrument used in this study is a semi-structured, in-depth interview addressing the participant's history of immigration, present life situation, issues of Jewish identity, and other relevant information (Appendix B). I developed this instrument using several sources. First, I wrote my own narrative of immigration and analyzed it for potential themes and questions. Second, parts of two existing interviews were utilized from "The Immigrant Second Generation in Metropolitan New York" (Mollenkopf, et al., 1997) and "Connections and Journeys" (Horowitz, 2000) studies. Both studies used semi-structured interviews to address their key questions. The first study focused on a group of Russian Jews who were born in the US or immigrated at an early age. Their questions about adjustment in the US, differences between Russian and American families, Jewish identity, and relationships with other Russian immigrants and Americans are relevant to the present study. The second study addressed the question of formation and continual development of Jewish identity among American Jews. The study's interview questions about Jewishness, its various ways of expression, and the dynamic nature of its development will be helpful for this study.

The interview will begin with questions about the participant's life at the present moment, including the person's career, family, relationships, and living situation. Questions about the participant's family of origin will then be asked. The major focus of the interviews will be on the process of immigration and the participant's experience of it. Since immigration starts long before one steps on US soil, I will ask questions about the decision-making process as it pertains to immigration, as well as major players,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

expectations, and pre-immigration stressors. As participants recollect the process of immigration and adjustment, I will ask them to reflect on their affective experiences and the impact this process has had on their sense of who they are. What are their relationships to the old land and to the new one? How do they see themselves in relation to Americans or their countrymen? I will also ask them to project themselves into the future and imagine how this process might continue.

The second part of the interview will address questions of Jewishness. It is most probable that these issues will come up earlier during the interview. Since the interview is semi-structured, I will allow participants to dictate the course of the interview. However, for the purpose of the study, I will ensure that this component of the interview is covered. I will ask them about the meaning of Jewishness and its development and change over their life span. How does their Jewish identity fit in with their sense of themselves? How is it expressed? I will ask them to reflect on their background and examine how it relates to their sense of Jewishness. I will also ask them to project their Jewishness into the future in terms of their own development, as well as their hopes for their children. Such projection often pushes people to reflect on their own conflicts and ways to resolve them.

## 2.4 Procedures

During the recruitment stage, I will inform potential participants that the purpose of this study is to better understand the experience of immigration among young Russian Jews. After the initial screening, they will sign an informed consent form before beginning the first interview (Appendix C). Two interviews of 4 to 6 hours total duration will be conducted with each participant. I will offer the participant a choice of being interviewed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in English or Russian. I will encourage them to feel free to speak either language during the interview as necessary. The interviews will be conducted at participants' homes, places of work, or other location that may be convenient for them. The interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. For interviews or portions of interviews in Russian, I will translate only quotes to be used in the manuscript. I will also take field notes after each interview. According to Newton (1995), in this type of research an investigator must meet with a participant on a sufficient number of occasions to develop a relationship. The quality of my relationship with participants will affect directly the quality of the data I collect. After the first interview, I will listen to the tape and write down inconsistencies or missing parts of the story to inquire about during the second interview. As I begin analyzing the data, other questions and areas of inquiry may be added to subsequent interviews.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed using techniques and procedures developed for qualitative research by Ely et al. (1997). As I commented above, the data analysis is not a final stage of this project. It already began with analysis of my own narrative and Boris' story. With each participant I gain new insights, go back to other interviews, and continue to be open for themes to emerge. Data analysis begins with sorting the data, or narrative, into content and process categories. For example, as I put codes on the margins of my first interview with Boris, they were tentative and overinclusive. I arranged them later by more general categories (Appendix D). I shared my the first interview with my research group who offered insights (e.g., need to be in control, regulating the interview process and his

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

emotions, dissociative mechanism, splitting) and suggested additional inquiry (e.g., can he acknowledge the importance of stability? Why does he only uses Russian with me outside of interviews? Why did he have so much affect in "90210" discussion? Learn more about his relationships with friends). With each following interview I continued the same process. After I completed my interviews with Boris, I made a list of more general themes (Appendix E). My first attempt at interpretation of these themes was demonstrated in my literature review. The major focus of this method is understanding the interrelationships between themes. With each subsequent interview, new themes and codes will be added and the prior interviews will be re-coded. Then each participant's story will be written up to provide the reader with an opportunity to draw his or her own conclusions. In addition to searching for and identifying patterns within each interview, I will then examine patterns across participants. I will construct a biographical sketch for each participant to summarize the interview, as I did with Boris. However, in final sketches will also include first-order "I-themes" with direct quotes from the interviews, my thoughts about them, and some comments regarding the relevant literature on the topic to provide the reader with sufficient data to allow him or her to come to his or her own views of the material (Newton, 1995).

In addition to my own analysis, a Russian-speaking research assistant will code the interviews independently. We will meet to discuss the coding, themes, and potential interpretations of the data to find points of convergence and divergence. The assistant will also read the final write-ups to verify their consistency with the original transcripts. I will also provide my research group, led by Dr. Jeffrey R. Rosen, with selected excerpts from the interview, listen to and record their comments and insights, and discuss my findings

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

with them. "It has been the support group that has the most often been instrumental in helping its members to face possible bias and possibly painful insights with grace and empathy, and in ways that resulted in constructive moves forward. Support groups can consider each member's emerging findings, suggest alternative explanations, and act as auditors of the research process" (Ely et al, 1991, p. 99).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Chapter 3

# The Stories

This chapter consists of ten write-ups of the participants' stories. Each write-up has two major parts: the description of the participant's story and the analysis of the themes. At the beginning of the first part I provide observational data from the interviews, including relevant discussions off tape and my countertransference reactions. Then I provide the description of the participant's life at the present moment. The second part includes direct quotations from the interviews and my thoughts about the themes emerging from the data, as well as some references to the theoretical literature when appropriate. More extensive review of the literature as related to the findings of the study will be provided in the discussion. This part often starts with one or two overall themes for the participant. Each part in this chapter is divided into three sections: 1) My immigration journey: from there to here; 2) Immigration experience: here I am; and 3) Jewishness: from there to here. The first section contains factual information about participants' immigration process. The second section focuses on the participants' reflections regarding the impact of the immigration process, their current relationship with American and Russian cultures, and other relevant data pertaining to where they are currently in the immigration process. Below are special punctuation marks within quotes.

| | |
|---|---|
| (text) | My questions or comments during the interview |
| [ ] | Part of the original quote is deleted for brevity |
| ... | Pause |
| *text* | Subject speaks English |
| TEXT | Subject makes emphasis |

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Regina**
**"Don't put me in a box - I want to be myself."**

*Regina is an attractive, sexy young woman who looks her stated age. She is slightly plump and has dark hair and eyes. We met in a fancy coffee shop in her neighborhood, a prestigious part of Manhattan. While Regina was somewhat shy at first, she soon relaxed and talked freely. She was not only articulate and open about her experiences, but also quite expressive with her body language. Regina was able to be open about some painful feelings she had experienced as an immigrant. However, she showed the most affect when describing in detail her wedding and its preparation, which she connected to missing being an actress and trying to recreate the feeling of being a performer and director. While her Russian is quite good, she frequently used English words and expressions during the interviews.*

Regina is an attractive and articulate 34 year-old woman who speaks English with a slight accent. Regina lives in Manhattan with her American-born husband whom she married a year ago after dating and living together for six years. She loves New York City and considers herself a New Yorker. Regina is a freelance illustrator, as is her husband, who also teaches in a local art college where they met. Recently she began working on her own project of writing and illustrating a children's book. In her free time Regina loves to cook, read, and dance. Her mother, who used to work as a costume designer in a Russian theater, also lives in New York and works as a hairdresser. Regina has both Russian and American friends with whom she socializes. She spoke of her life now as being more stable. While she and her husband have been thinking about having a child, Regina reported being hesitant to start because of the impact a child would have on her career and life style.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Regina immigrated to the United States as a refugee at age 25 from a large cosmopolitan city in Russia 8 years ago. She had been studying to be an actress for seven years prior to that. While her family had planned to immigrate many years before, Regina reported not wanting to go. She loved theater and believed that she would get a good job in one of the government-run theaters. However, by 1993 through a series of disappointments, Regina realized that she would not get the types of roles she wanted. She decided to go to the United States and attempt to start her life here. She described the difficult flight from Russia to the US after leaving her friends, theater, her mother, and her city. Regina did not imagine what her life would be like in the US. Her parents, who were divorced when she was 17 years old, stayed behind. She did not learn until one year after she immigrated that her father died from cancer only one month after she left. Within a year of her arrival, Regina made the decision to stay here permanently and told her mother to join her.

Regina immigrated alone and joined her grandparents who had come earlier. She remembered the juxtaposition of their cockroach-infested Bronx apartment with bananas and pineapples on the table. After being sick for a week, she remembered going outside and walking near a Laundromat. She described the smell of Irish Spring soap as something both familiar and new. At first she reported hating everything American: the canned and packaged food, the tasteless strawberries in the winter. Working as a waitress in an Israeli restaurant, Regina remembered her daily anxiety about being fired because of her mishaps with English. She reported feeling that she would never be able to communicate with Americans and that she was an exile. Regina soon decided to move in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

with an American roommate. She said that she needed to learn the language in order to understand Americans and to communicate with them.

Regina began learning English and walking daily around the city. She remembered walking for miles and falling in love with tall buildings, streets, and the ocean. Regina said that her drawings and art work at that time reflect loneliness and the immensity of the city. Regina also reported enjoying the diversity of the city because she did not feeling different from others. She stated that having experienced herself as a "dark" Jew in Russia, Regina felt "normal" since everyone in New York was an immigrant. She spoke about the first one and a half years as difficult and described mixed feelings of depression and excitement. During the day, Regina was able to keep herself busy. However, when the night fell, she remembered crying. She said that her ability to cry about being alone, missing her friends and her mother helped her. Of all the things missed, she longed for the theater the most. For about two years after her arrival in the US, she reported not being able to watch a Broadway show without running out of the theater in tears.

Soon after her arrival, Regina met a guy on a subway and became involved with him for three months. He was of African-American and German background. She was physically attracted to him, but did not understand for a long time that he was emotionally unstable because of his drug use. However, Regina reported that she continued the relationship for three more months because she was mostly intrigued and drawn to his Black grandmother who provided warm and human interaction for her.

In terms of her professional life, Regina initially hoped to continue to be involved with theater by teaching it to children. Soon she realized that there were many Russian immigrants living here who had more theater experience than she did. She stated that one

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the most important steps in her adjustment was pursuing the study of art and design in college. She listed several reasons why entering college was so crucial to her adjustment: she was among people who thought alike, she could be creative and be respected for her work, people were diverse, she could speak English, and there was genuine interest toward her as a Russian. Regina stated that she went against her cousin's advice that she should just get a job and not waste money on an education. She received a scholarship and continued to work. As noted earlier, Regina realized that she could live and survive in the US. During her first year in college, she met, fell in love, and moved in with another Russian immigrant and reported feeling that she was no longer alone. At that point, she called her mother and told her to move here. Upon her mother's arrival, Regina reported having mixed feelings. On one hand, she had a close person to her. On the other hand, as her mother struggled to adjust and fell into depression, Regina re-experienced her own struggle.

Regina also commented on traveling around the country and out of the country as important aspects of her adjustment. As she visiting different cities, she reported feeling that she was a part of something bigger. One of the most important events was her trip to Israel. On that trip she decided that she had made the right decision to immigrate to the US. Regina felt that both Israel and Russia provide little choice. While in Israel one is a Jew, in Russia one is a Russian. Regina stated that in the US, in New York, she could disappear and be herself.

Soon Regina met her husband, an American Jew, who taught illustration at the school. She was attracted to him both because of his personality and his background. They started dating a year later and Regina moved in with him soon after. As she

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

continued her study, Regina realized that illustrating could be a professional path for her. With her talent and her husband's support, Regina considers herself making good progress in her field.

### Immigration experience: here I am

Regina spoke about the gradual process of understanding American culture. When asked to separate her immigration experience into several stages, she used the process of learning English language as a marker. Without identifying specific points, Regina described learning English as a slow upward movement, with small ups and downs, that continues to the present moment. When she first began learning English, she noticed that while speaking Russian she included many English words and phrases. As her English improved, she began focusing on using more proper Russian without mixing English.

Regina also noticed a change in her attitudes toward cultural differences. For example, she spoke about her relationship with her husband and the gradual process of accepting each other's differences. As her husband met more Russian immigrants, he stopped stereotyping and began to enjoy Russian parties and cultural events. However, Regina's Russian friends continued to have difficulties in understanding how she could be in a relationship with an American. Regina spoke about learning about and entering American culture as a difficult but welcomed challenge for her. She described herself as a person who is always open to new experiences. However, Regina emphasized that she does not consider herself an American (except if she were visiting Russia) because she does not want to belong to a clan. She stated that she would rather describe herself as belonging to New York city, as a New Yorker. Regina at times feels closer to other

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Europeans in the US, than to Americans.

Regina described a change in her attitudes toward Brighton Beach and its residents. While at first she experienced pain and negative emotions when visiting Brighton Beach, now she looks at it with a sense of humor and understanding. Regina used to feel that she did not want to be associated with Russians living in Brighton Beach because she felt nothing in common with them. As her confidence and self-knowledge increased, she reported feeling calmer about it. Regina realized that immigrating to the US in effect equalized many Russians with different backgrounds in the FSU.

Regina told me that she has not gone back to visit her city in Russia. Initially, she reasoned that she did not have a green card, had little money, and felt it was dangerous. Later she wanted to travel to other countries first. Then she lost contact with her friends. However, she realized that she now had a fear of going back and seeing how everything and everyone changed, including herself. Regina spoke mostly about missing her city, the streets, and the buildings. She reported wanting to go with her husband to show him her native city.

During the second interview, Regina spoke about our first interview as providing her with an opportunity to reflect on her journey. She had a good feeling that she had achieved a lot. Regina spoke about the strong impact of the immigration process on her as a person. She stated that going through such an experience on her own allowed her to learn about herself, to know who she was. Regina reported that she learned that she could be assertive in thinking about herself, rather than always focusing on other people. Regina learned to rely on herself and realized her strengths. She became more confident in her ability to achieve and succeed.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

However, Regina was clear that this process was not simple or easy. She described two dreams she began having after immigrating. In one dream, she relived the anxiety of coming out on a theater stage and forgetting all the words. In the second dream, she was a black mother with a child she was trying to protect. Regina reflected that the child represented her "soul" that she has to protect on her own.

Throughout the interview, Regina commented on her age or maturational processes as playing a significant role in her immigration experience. She said that she was proud and happy to have immigrated at age 25 because she was a fully developed individual with a certain background that helped her here. However, Regina acknowledged that her age also made it more difficult to enter American life. She described herself as a more reserved, even suspicious person now. Regina also commented that she prefers to be alone more now than before. She provided several reasons for such change, including her age. Other reasons were change in her profession and spending too much time with her husband. She also wondered if her wish to be alone more has something to do with her plans to have a child. Regina wants to accomplish as much as possible on her own before they have a child.

Regina also spoke about her changing views on stability. She seemed somewhat conflicted about it. In the past, she feared stability and viewed it as boredom, peace, and hopelessness. As she turned 30, she stated that she began to enjoy it. Regina reported that now it means not having to look for anyone or anything, it means having a partner, home, friends. Regina feels confident in her ability to create, to be somebody.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Regina grew up in a mixed family of Jews on her mother's side, and Russian Kazaks on her father's side. While she reported that her mother's family was open and tolerant, her paternal grandparents were open anti-Semites. She described her father trying to learn Yiddish and always defending her mother. In spite of her Russian last name, Regina also experienced anti-Semitism in school. While at first she tried to hide her nationality, for the most part she actively defended herself, including getting involved in physical fights. Her earliest memories about being a Jew are about feeling different and ashamed. Since her maternal grandparents spoke Yiddish, as a child Regina was embarrassed to be seen with them. She felt that Jews did not belong to the society. Regina also used to perceive Jews as victims. Only after her trip to Israel and her life in the US did she see a different part of Jewishness.

Regina focused on the ethnic conflict in the family as one of the reasons it is so important for her to be herself. She compared being a Black person in America with being a Jew in Russia. Even in the theater she was given only certain roles because she had dark eyes and hair. At the same time, Regina stated that she was and still is seen by more religious Jews as not a real Jew because of her father. Regina also spoke about her Jewishness as an essential part of herself that helped her to be a better actress. At the same time, she stated that she is also proud to be a Russian. At age 13 she asked to be baptized in order to get in touch with her paternal family's roots.

At this time, Regina describes her Jewishness as having to do with roots and background. However, she stressed that she does not want to be put in a box and identified only as a Jew. Therefore, while she was fascinated with Israel, she said that she

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

would not want to live there. While she chose her husband not only because he was Jewish, Regina acknowledged that it was an important part of her connection with him. Both of them are not religious and have similar views. Regina believes that her children will be Jews because they will know about their background and will celebrate certain holidays. Yet, it is important for her that they are free to be themselves. Sometimes Regina reported feeling pressure from her husband's family to be more Jewish in terms of observance. After immigrating to the US, she found herself explaining to American Jews what it means for her to be Jewish. At times she felt that she was expected to become more religious by American Jews. In spite of these experiences, among the Americans Regina reported feeling closer to Jews.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF REGINA: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

### My immigration journey: from there to here

Theme 1: It was my decision to immigrate.

> It was my decision. It's sad but it was mostly my professional life. I mean when I began to realize that I won't be able to be an actress there, in Russia. [ ] The main reason, of course, is your talent. But there were other little things. For example, I was one of the three actresses in the institute who had black eyes and black hair. [ ] I was always given the roles of either *Jewish, Ukrainian, Tatar, or black people*. In other words, *I felt like a black woman basically, black mother. Always.* Not because I was a Jew. [ ] Just because I was the type. You can't get away from it unless you are an incredible actor. I was not an incredible actor. I was good. [ ] I did not want to be a *mediocre person. I was, I think. I was OK but I was not amazing.* [ ] I was tired of proving myself. *I just realized that I am not as good as I thought I was.* Then my personal life, I broke up with my boyfriend at the time. [ ] I mean things just started falling apart. [ ] So I decided to go and see. (p. 6-7)

> When I entered college, I already fell in love with New York. I mean I realized that I can live here. And going to school helped me a lot. So, after my first semester I told my mother to come. I decided that I... I will probably make it. That I will probably be able to live here." (p. 53)

It is absolutely clear that Regina experiences herself as an active agent in making this life change. This points to "the feeling of being in charge of constructing one's identity, of being responsible for who one is, and of being committed to one's choices" (Blasi, 1988, pp. 233-234). Regina saw immigration as an opportunity to make a change in her life's trajectory. Being active in making a decision to immigrate is often a good predictor of the person's future adjustment. Similarly, later on she makes deliberate decisions about living with an American roommate, learning English, and going to school. The theme of the participants' sense of agency or lack there of in making decisions about the immigration process will continue to appear in their stories. It is important to note that Regina left herself a way out in case things don't work out in the US. In addition, she

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

made this decision based on a mature assessment of her talent and ability as an actress. While she points to other factors impeding her success, she is able to acknowledge her weaknesses.

Theme 2: Initial period - I was depressed and excited.

Even before experiencing any feelings, Regina speaks of numbness before her immigration. Here is how she remembers the day she left:

> When I was going to America, flying in the plane, that horrible flight everybody knows. When you don't know where you are going. I had so many friends. Feelings were... I had none. Because I was so... First of all, I was absolutely drunk. Second, I was in such a crazy state that I just don't remember. I just remember the physical sensations of sitting in my seat. I remember my body, I was physically squeezed. I remember that sensation even now. And my soul, my everything was somewhere... close, really close. Not in Russia, but right there, next to my body. I saw myself, the way I was sitting. (p. 8)

This description speaks to a defense mechanism of dissociation Regina used to cope with overwhelming affect. There is a loss of friends and the fear of the unknown. While some immigrants have no memories of that flight at all, Regina is able to reflect on the state of her mind, fragmented as it is. This may point in general to her ability to be reflective.

What follows is an articulate expression of both an initial depression Regina experienced and her excitement about the new city:

> I had terrible depression. I missed my friends, my country terribly. But at the same time, [ ] when I walked around New York, I was absolutely ecstatic about the city and I felt great. It was a very strange feeling. On one hand, everything was unhappy. On the other hand, I was absolutely happy as soon as I arrived. Even when I thought, "why did I do this?" - that first month - "How could I tear myself away?" It was a painful process, but at the same time there was joy and happiness from little ordinary things. How could one not to admire this city. Even though you feel absolutely alone, and unhappy, and things are hard. (p. 52)
>
> Depression usually came at night, when I had to go home. During the day, things were more or less normal. I mean it was somewhere in the background of my soul. But the city was like... I just simply walked a lot and it helped me. [ ] But

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> when you come home at night, or when... at that moment, when you realized that (smiles) you have to go home, to drag your feet somewhere, realizing, that [you are going] to a strange person who lives there. That was depression. (What helped you?) Helped... Maybe ability to sob and cry helped to some extent. Because when you cry, you... it's like a feeling of redemption and relief afterwards. I mean on an animal level, not even on emotional level. (p. 52)

> (What did you cry about?) I cried because I was alone. I missed my mom, my friends, theater terribly. Just terribly. I couldn't even go to a movie. First two years, I couldn't go to theater at all. I mean the first three years I did not go to a theater because every time when I entered a theater, it ended with me sobbing and running out. [ ] I couldn't watch other people perform on the stage. When I will never... [ ] Everything changed when I came here and realized that I will never be an actress. It was very painful. I mean, this realization was the most terrible thing out of everything. That you will not be an actor, that you miss your country, your friends. That you are an exile, completely. (p. 53)

Her depression was not only connected to the loss of her country and friends, to the isolation she felt. Regina points to the simultaneous loss of a dream to be an actress. These two losses not only happened at the same time, they were connected to her decision to immigrate. One may see it as the second part of the mourning process: morning for the lost aspects of the self (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). It is also important to note that Regina does not focus on the day-to-day difficulties of adjustment. At some point she briefly commented on the "crash course into American life." She is focused on her internal world. On one hand, this probably led to more pain. On the other hand, it appeared to provide an outlet that allowed her to move on.

The other aspect of her initial experience is her excitement about the new city. One may see it as a hypomanic defense frequently used by immigrants during the first few months (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). There is also an element of an Oedipal defense:

> Because I felt like a bird. Only you are not flying right now, just sitting somewhere. And then you will fly higher, over the huge... That you will fly higher than them [buildings]. That if a man could build this. Even though it's *super ugly in some ways*. But if men, small like ants, could build something like

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> that, then you can do it too. (p. 9)

She identifies with an ideal, with men who build these buildings as a source of inspiration for herself. As a visual imagery person, Regina easily absorbs the new and exciting images. In contrast, Olga wrote poetry, which will be presented in her write-up later on, that expressed her feelings. However, there was another element in her excitement and love for New York City:

> Because I was no longer the *dark, something weird, different*. I was like *normal. Just a Spanish girl. Nothing more, nothing less.* [ ] I realized that I could have my own little niche in the city." (p. 9)

This can be seen as a more mature and adaptive defense in which she tries to find her own place in society. Regina wants to be her own person. There is an implication, however, that feeling different before immigrating meant being "less than." This theme will be discussed in more detail in the next two sections.

> (When you think of immigration, what comes to mind?) With immigration, in general, I don't feel like an immigrant anymore (smiles). The associations with immigration are NYANA[13], "I love New York" coffee cup and high-rises, like you know. Tall buildings, etc. Sea port. People in suits and ties. [ ] Both women and men, all in a sort of uniform. I guess immigration for me is probably simply New York. Just to see, like I said before, bananas and pineapple juice in my grandparents' kitchen. That's my first association. I mean a lot of food. And everything tastes the same. (p. 47)

Once again, Regina associates immigration with images, city, and tastes. In general, she uses all her senses to cope with painful feelings. She walks miles and miles around the city in part, probably, to get tired. She cries to get relief. She absorbs the city. What strikes me about Regina is her ability to fully experience feelings. She does not hide them from others or herself.

---

[13] NYANA stands for New York Association for the New Americans. It is one of refugee resettling agencies in New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As Regina tried to make sense of the new world, she grabbed onto familiar objects that also provided a window into this world. Sometimes she used her sense of smell:

> It was different from other smells. It was new. It was very Russian in some way, the smell of our soap. Then it was a mix of something familiar, of Soviet soap, because it was the cheapest and *basic*, with something different. [ ] It gave me a sense of warmth, but at the same time it was something a little exotic, different. It's a sense of hope. I mean, on one hand, it's a sense of home in some respect. On the other hand, a sense of something new. (p. 56)

This is not unusual. Many immigrants use material and non-material objects, such as smells, music, and sounds, to stay connected to the things left behind. Regina spoke about the smell of mushrooms and trees near her summer house reminding her the smells of Russia. Over time, objects rather than people become even more important. As she lost touch with her friends over the years, Regina now misses the streets and buildings in her native city.

Theme 3: Adjusting to the US was a gradual process for me.

> (Was there a moment or moments, in terms of adaptation, when you realized that you understood Americans and could express yourself?) No, there was no moment. But I know exactly what you are talking about. But it was a slow ... (gradual?) very gradual process. (Were there any small moments that told you that...?) Well, like yesterday I went to [ ] see Moulin Rouge. And the whole film is based on *cultural references*. [ ] And suddenly I realized that I know all the songs. I mean, it was the first time that I could, I mean a moment like that. (p. 19)

> The easiest way to divide them [stages of adaptation] would be according to the knowledge of English. [ ] I would separate them according to an upward progression, of course. I mean, first it was at zero, then it became better, better, better, and better. But it was not a straight line upward. It was all sort of upward, but with small downs and ups constantly. [ ] It continues to happen now. I mean all the time. And one day is different from another. Let's take, you get up in the morning and for some reason... suddenly, or ... with a certain person - you speak English beautifully. In general, simply... you are understood. I mean to find words, you have your sense of humor, everybody just dies from laughter. [ ] The next day you get up, or not the next day. And you can't put two words together. (p. 67-68)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

While Regina describes the process of learning English, one can clearly see the parallels with how she views the process of adaptation to a new world. There are three elements of the process. First, it is gradual. It is impossible to identify exact moments or stages. However, there are moments of realization that something changed. Second, it is upward. Your knowledge and comfort increase. And third, it is an up and down process that continues into the present day.

There is another element of this process Regina does not name, but it is implied. It is the relationship to individuals with whom she communicates. For example, there is a gradual change in her relationship with her husband. From my perspective, one could divide her adjustment process according to her three relationships:

Stage 1: Dating a Black-German man - pure physical attraction without deep understanding;
Stage 2: Dating another Russian immigrant - reconnecting with the past;
Stage 3: Dating and marrying her husband - connecting on a deeper level with an American.

If I apply Akhtar's (1999) notion of movement along the dimension of social affiliation, a move from yours or mine to ours, Regina moved from a fascination with a stranger or reconnecting with someone from her culture to making a life commitment to an American.

## Immigration experience: here I am

Theme 4: I can be who I am. Being a New Yorker fits me.

> In America it is easier to be nothing and everything. To disappear. Your *identity*, so to say. In Israel, you are a Jew, *for better or worse*, you cannot leave it. Or in Russia you are a Russian. Something like that. You have more opportunity to be everything in America. You walk down the street and you can be, you are who you are, who you appear to be. But you look at certain people and you become in part those people you see. You can disappear, you can be a chameleon more. There are many aspects in America that I don't like. But the unique thing,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> especially not in America but in New York, is that you can sort of disappear, that you can be yourself. You can have your soul, your soul can be, you don't have to be part part of that country, the one you belong to. You see? That's what I realized when I went to Israel. For me, it suits me. I like to disappear. I don't want to be anyone: not a Jew, not a Russian, not an American. I want to be myself. I can be that in New York. (p. 13-14)

Throughout the interview Regina spoke about her wish and need to be herself, to "have your soul." This need comes from a place of discomfort, a place of having no choice. She does not want to be labeled or categorized. When she talks about "disappearing," I think of the opposite. She does not want to be "visible" in a negative sense of the word. New York represents a chance to make her own choices. Regina feels that being a New Yorker fits her, fits her wish to be herself. It is a desire for your identity to be defined by you, not others.

"To be myself" is an overall identity theme for Regina. It permeates the story about her family, her decision to be an actress, her fears and dreams about her life in the US, and her values. I would also suggest that her current hesitation about having children may be in part related to her fear of losing her sense of who she is.

Theme 5: Overall, the immigration process has had a positive impact on me.

Regina is clear about the positive impact of immigration. She focuses on learning about herself, feeling more confident, and being able to rely on herself:

> (How did immigration affect you as a person?) It affected me very strongly. First, I think everyone should try to experience something like this. [ ] The person should be alone at some point. [ ] It's very important to understand who you are. When you are alone, isolated in the country without language, without friends, without family. [ ] You begin... When a person only relies on himself. He... he... some positive and negative qualities are discovered very quickly for himself. And it is very important to always know who you are. I mean, what you are capable of. (p. 44)
>
> I missed one thing. Most important thing, probably. [ ] You begin to understand

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> that you can rely on yourself in a good sense of the word. That you... If you are somebody, or you think, and you try, that there will be some *payback*. It gives you wings and self confidence. In Russia, and especially in my profession, it doesn't matter who you are... Who you are it's one thing. But what's gonna happen with you, and how your life will turn out, it's something completely different. It does not depend on you or your qualities as much as it does here. [ ] Here, a lot more depends on you. And that... that gives you a lot of strengths, when you realize that even... It's hard now, but but I think that if I get through... get through, get through this period of time, and I will remain who I am, that later there will be... there will be some reward. I will get what I want. (p46)

The process of "going through" something difficult, watching yourself succeed, and realizing your own strengths is rewarding. Through small victories Regina incorporates the new qualities and knowledge into her self concept. Pine's (1982) concept of the "expansion of the self" is applicable here. The theme of "payback" or some type of response from the environment will be present with other participants as well. While Regina emphasizes her independence, I see a relationship with the environment that provides this "payback."

Theme 6: I needed to protect parts of myself I value.

As we hear Regina's story, it is clear that the process of becoming more confident and self-reliant is not easy. There is a fear of losing herself and realization that she is alone:

> I had this dream. When I felt... [ ] I suddenly realized that I am a black woman with a black child. And this feeling of fear. I mean in this country (laughs). Everyone is white there. And everyone is looking at you. And you are black, and you are with a black child. And you have to... you feel such... I mean you have to save your child. Whatever happens to you, doesn't matter. But how is he gonna live with these people in this country. [ ] You are a mother, first. And you have a child. That is you are responsible. On the other hand, you are sort of an exile. [ ] I think that to some extent the child is maybe yourself, your soul, your inner world. I think so. (And your desire to protect as a mother?) The sense that you are alone in this... That you can only rely on yourself. I mean your child is you. That's it. You are responsible for yourself. You are a mother and a child at the same time. You don't exist anymore. You are already a mother. You are not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

a child anymore. And you have to protect yourself. (p. 57)

Regina eloquently speaks to every immigrant's fear of losing one's soul. What if I change? She feels like a child who is learning to live in this new world. However, she is also her own parent in this situation. Preserving her sense of self is one of her first tasks. Another example of this fear is Regina's hesitancy to visit Russia. She is worried of the changes she may see in others and herself.

Theme 7: Stability is important for me now.

When asked to describe her life at the present moment, Regina finished her description with "everything calmed down somewhat and changed, not to the better, but to be more stable." When I asked her to elaborate on the concept of stability in her life as related to immigration, Regina had mixed things to say about stability:

> I was always afraid of stability. [ ] (What did it mean, stability?) It meant boredom, peace without any movement, without anything interesting. And, I mean, hopelessness to some extent. Because you are, it's like everything stopped, everything is done, created and there is no future. It's like you are already getting old and that's it. The next step is death (smiling). But now, when I got older and turned thirty, stability is good, I changed my views a little. (What does it mean now?) First, it means that I don't have to look for anything. I mean... First, you are not alone. When you are twenty to twenty five or thirty, you are looking for a partner, you are searching for some... You are alone, let's assume, or you are not alone but you are with someone you don't want. [ ] I have a home, I have dacha, I have my garden (laughs). I have my friends that I can rely on more or less comp... (laughs), you know. And finally, I have my husband, my partner, I don't have to search for something, to run somewhere. [ ] So, I mean in the sense of material things and those around me, it's good to have stability. (p. 42-43)

While Regina focuses on the developmental reasons for the changes in her view of stability, I see a direct relationship to the immigration process. Earlier she talked about her initial depression, being alone, and her losses. Her sense of stability is about feeling grounded and connected. While other participants may voice it in different ways, the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

theme of stability will appear again.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Theme 8: For me, being Jewish means being "less than."

> First time, I was taking a tram with my grandparents. The tram was packed and they started speaking Yiddish. I was probably around 6. And it was, I was so ashamed, terribly ashamed, and I was probably all... [blushed]. And people would turn heads, and first of all, they didn't understand what kind of language it was. Many would quickly guess because they looked very Jewish. And that they were my grandparents, I couldn't [reject them] because I was very small. Such childish, sincere perception. On the other hand, shame that you are not like, that you belong to a family that speaks a different language, and that it is a Jewish language. It's something, I already knew that Jewishness was something... And in school, they already started calling each other Jews. Even calling other Russians "Jews" as a curse (laughing). [ ] In the teacher's journal, everyone is Russian, but someone was a Jew. (You were a Jew or a Russian?). I was a Russian, but there was someone else. And then again, that you are dark and everyone else is white. (p. 27-28)

> (Before you immigrated, what did mean to be Jewish?) It meant to be different. It meant that you are separate from the herd. That lamb that can be eaten by a wolf because you are on the outside. It's very interesting, because when I came to America I had dreams that I am a black woman with a little child. I had them all the time and I was thinking, why? *Why do I see myself as a black mother*? That everything is falling apart, complete lazha[14] in the dream and I am with a child, he is mine, and I am black, or mulatto, and the baby is black/mulatto. The sense, the cliché, black mother, being black in America, it's much easier now, but still it exists. And this connection, to be a Jew in Russia to some extent, these dreams when I came over here, *I felt like a black person here*. Not because people mistreated me. It was unconscious. (*You identify?*) Yes, you feel you are not, you are like, you differ. I think that's in part why I had these dreams. (p. 28)

Regina's original sense of being Jewish is about being "less than." While she talks about being "different," her metaphor of the vulnerable lamb that will be eaten by a wolf speaks to a deeper sense of badness. This is not an unusual experience for members of a minority group. Kaufman and Raphael's (1987) description of an American Jew as "an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

eternal outsider" applies to Russian Jews as well. Like in the United States, the former Soviet Union also valued conformity. Those who are different will feel inferior. This sense of shame about being different is imposed by others and may have nothing to do with a child's home environment. Although I wonder how much the non-Jewish part of her family contributed to this sense of shame. Regina also expresses her feeling that you cannot get rid of this difference. She equates Jews to Blacks, implying that you cannot hide your Jewishness just as you cannot hide your black skin. Regina elaborates on the origins of her sense of shame below.

Theme 9: Roots of wanting to be myself are related to Jewishness.

The literature shows that members of any minority or any marginalized group experience their difference and react to it in different ways. For Regina, her sense of difference had a major impact on her identity.

> (Where does this come from?) To be myself? (Yes) The desire to disappear? (Yes) First of all, well there are many factors. The main factor, not main but from the childhood, it's my family. My mom is from a very Jewish *background*. [ ] It's *heavy duty stuff*... (laughing). But at the same time they were very open people, not that they don't like Russians or anything. But still it's very Jewish. But on my father's side, they were Kazaks, terrible anti-Semites. When my grandfather (paternal) saw my mom's passport, he started crying. Started crying because he saw that she is a Jew and he loved her SO MUCH! [ ] So that's my family. They are so different, two opposites. So Jewish, so Russian. [ ] Such racism, passionate, on one hand. On the other hand, such Jewishness, *friendly, but you cannot hide your nose, you know, even if you are friendly and open*. [ ] And I grew up in this. Who am I? It is so strong around you, the Jewishness, the Russianness, that you just want to... Who are you? You are Jew! No, you are a Russian! No, you are a Jew! For Russians you are a Jew, for Jews you are a Russian. At some point you just want to say, I am a Jew AND I am a Russian, I am who I am. Here, I suddenly realized that it is not even a question so much. Well, it is a question, but... It's *no one's land*. (p. 14-15)

---

[14] Lazha is a slang word that translates approximately as "everything is a total mess."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Regina responded to the family and internal conflict regarding her ethnic identification with her wish and decision to be herself. Rather than rejecting one or the other, she insists on incorporating both into her identity. However, she could not escape the labeling by others. Only in the US, in New York, does she feel that it does not matter as much. To reiterate my point, Regina's ethnic and national identification are related to her overall theme of wanting to be herself.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Mark**
**"I feel torn - Who am I, really?"**

*Mark is an attractive young man who looks his stated age. He wears glasses and is beginning to lose his hair. We met in a public gallery space near his job three times. Throughout the interviews Mark tried to engage me in conversation. It was clear that he wanted to please and impress me, while simultaneously trying to charm me. He wanted to know my opinion, to engage me in helping him answer questions, and to receive feedback about himself. Mark was anxious and at times appeared depressed, especially when talking about his ex-wife. While the subject of his divorce came up a number of times, I had a clear sense that we could not discuss this aspect of his life. After the first interview he told me how painful it was to talk about it. He spoke about having a "wound" that still hurts, even though it does not affect his life. Mark was more relaxed during the next two interviews.*

Mark is a 31 year-old divorced man who lives in New York with his parents and younger sister. Mark has a BS in accounting and has a CPA certificate. Recently, he began studying for a Masters in Computer Science. He works as a liaison between accounting and programming departments in a law firm. While Mark stated that he enjoys his work, he sometimes wonders about his interest in humanities. In his free time he likes to watch movies, drama in particular. For example, he reported watching "English Patient" several times because of the parallels with his own life. Mark told me that he was not satisfied with his present life and that this sense of dissatisfaction was related to his divorce four years prior. He wished that he had more regular work hours, an intimate relationship, and an opportunity for continual self-improvement.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Mark immigrated to the United states as a refugee at age 22 with his family from a large city in Moldova 9 years ago. His family did not discuss the decision to immigrate. They left with the wave of Jews leaving the USSR at the end of 80s and beginning of 90s. Mark said that the decision to immigrate to the US, rather than Israel, was based on the economic factors. Mark reported that he and his mother insisted on immigration, while his father was hesitant. According to Mark, even after nine years his father continues to have difficulty adjusting to the US. At the time of their immigration Mark returned from his required two-year military service. Prior to the service he was pursuing a college degree in mechanical engineering following his father's footsteps, although he reported having no interest in the subject. Mark married at age 21 upon the insistence of his mother and wife-to-be. According to Mark, both of them believed that he should get married before immigrating.

Upon his arrival to the US, Mark reported being struck by the grayness of his neighborhood and the cockroach-infested apartment. In spite of his objections, his wife insisted that Mark begin college immediately. Mark went to a private university in New York and majored in Accounting on the advice of his friend. He reported being concerned about taking out loans and his lack of English. He also worked part-time at school. Mark and his wife lived with his paternal grandparents for the first year and a half. He described it as a difficult period because of the conflicts with his grandfather. In terms of support, Mark stated that they received most useful information from other Russian immigrants, especially a group of friends, rather than his relatives.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

When asked about his free associations to immigration, Mark spoke in great detail about the initial fear of the unknown and how that fear helped him to move forward and adjust. According to Mark, going to school and interacting with Americans was an essential part of this process. He described the moments of apprehension and embarrassment that motivated him to improve his English and engage in conversations with Americans. Mark described his adjustment process as an intense and sharp movement forward during the first two or three years with eventual leveling out and comfort. However, he expressed his disdain for the comfort level and lack of self-improvement he experienced after that.

After graduating from college and getting his CPA certification, Mark worked for a major consulting firm on various projects. He commented on the positive impact his first job had on his ability to interact with Americans. After his first year with this company, Mark and his wife divorced on his wife's initiative. Mark spoke about his event being enormously traumatic and unexpected. He told me that while the first two years were the worst, he is still struggling to cope with it. Mark has not dated anyone since the divorce. During the last four years he traveled for his job both in the US and abroad. While working in Germany, Mark visited his native city. In describing his visit, he focused on the non-human environment. After returning from Europe, Mark worked on a project in a law firm and was hired by them approximately one year ago. It is there that he decided to change fields from accounting to computer science. Mark described this change as the first conscious decision he had made in his life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

Even before the question of how immigration affected him was asked, Mark spoke about believing in his own abilities when he was able to succeed in college during his first year there. When we began talking about the impact of immigration, Mark focused on the concept of self confidence and confidence in the future. He also believed that having gone through immigration experience he was better able to cope with difficult events in his life. Yet, several times Mark also commented on his awareness of not being strong or brave in dealing with life stressors currently. Throughout the discussion Mark appeared confused about whether his immigration experience helped him be more confident or contributed to his concerns regarding his future. He also spoke about becoming more serious, careful, and tense. In addition, he commented on the process of reappraisal of his values. For example, as compared to his focus on material values before immigrating, Mark is now more concerned with learning skills and gaining knowledge that he will keep, no matter what happens. His goal is self-improvement in the areas of language, professional skills, and cultural knowledge. Several times during the interviews Mark commented on the difficulty separating the impact of the immigration experience and his development as a person.

As a person, Mark described himself as confused between his wish to be independent and his tendency to follow traditions. He spoke about the conflict between being conservative and open to new experiences. Mark raised the topic of traditions and their importance to him several times during the interviews. At one point he spoke about traditions providing a foundation for making decisions. On another occasion Mark expressed regret that he is not able to follow his intellect rather than traditions.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In terms of his relationship with Russian and American cultures, Mark reported changes throughout his immigration process. During his first four years in the US, he had little interactions with Americans, had little information about American pop culture, and spoke mostly Russian. However, even during that time Mark already knew that his goal was to integrate into the American society. As he began watching television shows and interacting with coworkers, Mark reported feeling closer to them and less anxious. Recently, he even began considering an intimate relationship with an American woman. He wants to be a part of American society. At the same time, Mark stated that he will always be a Russian and will be connected to Russian culture. When asked about his feelings and views about Brighton Beach, he also reported a change. While Mark used to avoid going there, now he frequents it and enjoys being there. Similarly, he used to be embarrassed about his accent. Now he likes it and intends to keep it.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Mark grew up with his maternal grandparents until he was five years old. They spoke Yiddish at home and followed some religious traditions, such as celebrating holidays. Although his grandfather attended synagogue services regularly, his grandparents did not encourage Mark to learn about religion. Mark spoke fondly of his grandparents, whose house was open to anyone, independent of their religion. He related his relationship with them during his childhood to his need to follow traditions as an adult. Although Mark described himself as not very religious, he insisted that Jewish cultural and religious traditions are very important to him. He, in particular, focused on his belief that he cannot marry a non-Jew. While Mark disagrees with this idea intellectually, he will

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

follow this tradition. He described how his parents and grandparents subtly encourage it.

Mark spoke about his sense of belonging to the Jewish nation, his patriotism, and sense of privilege. He spent a great deal talking about importance of Holocaust history as related to his Jewish identity. He described his conversations with Germans on the subject and his indignation about people who want to stop talking about it. While Mark reported mostly positive feelings regarding Jewishness, he commented briefly on the fact that he prefers non-Jewish friends. Mark began talking about the stereotypes of Jews being cunning and greedy, but then refused to expand on the subject. When asked about his hopes in terms of Jewishness for his future kids, Mark spoke about not wanting them to be religious, but hoping that he can instill in them a sense of tradition and morals.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF MARK: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: I am full of contradictions and conflicts

Before I discuss Mark's experience of the immigration process, I would like to share a small vignette that clearly identifies one of the overall themes for his sense of himself.

> Well, my two grandfathers were complete opposites. My mother's father is very lively. Now he is over 80, and he constantly surprises us. People are attracted to him. Like he travels constantly. He is traveling more, than he lives in New York. [ ] That's how he is, business like, he worked in sales, very communicative person. That always impressed me, such qualities. Like his spontaneity in everything. He absolutely does not think too much. Of course he thinks as much as he needs to, but not too much. (He is not constrained.) Not constrained, he does not think twice. If you need to do something, he always chooses to do something, rather than to think about doing it. [ ] I was always impressed by it. And my dad's father is a complete opposite. I don't want to repeat myself, everything I said about my other grandfather, but just the opposite. A person who takes everything so seriously, who is worried about everything, who thinks about things a lot. Like, we've been living separately for many years and he would still call every evening to see if everyone is home... Like things beyond his reach and he should not worry about, he worries. (p. 38-39)

Mark's two grandfathers represent his projections of the undesired current self and desired future, or ideal, self. Throughout the interview he described himself as "not strong," "too serious," and "constrained." Yet he wishes to be spontaneous, confident, and independent. I believe that Mark's current depression is not only related to the loss of his wife, but is also compounded by this identity conflict. As noted previously, according to Erikson, the resolution of inner conflicts leads to a person's increased sense of inner unity, good judgment, and capacity to do well. Mark is still struggling to resolve a major identity conflict that typically arises during adolescence. According to the literature, the immigration process can provide an opportunity to rework conflicts from an earlier age. I will address the question of what role the immigration experience played in Mark's case

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

below.

Theme 2: My decisions are externally driven.

> Seriously, I am saying that it's a very serious struggle of opposites, very serious. I just don't know whether I am strong and brave enough to close my eyes on traditions and act according to my intellect. (p. 26)

> I think I was under the influence of two women, my future wife and my mom. [ ] Because they were both insisting on marriage. [ ] When we were dating, I did not want to. I was not sure then if I wanted to get married. I mean, I knew that I did not want to get married early, but not sure if I wanted to marry this person. [ ] I was a child. Here. She [my future wife] told me that "If you leave, most probably you won't come back." And somehow I was under her influence, I think. [ ] I remember one conversation in detail. The essence of that conversation was that she, I think, was even begging me, well, not begging but trying to convince me that it's better to get married now." (p. 45)

> [He was recalling the conversation with his mother about getting married.] I mean, it was very important for me that my parents liked my girlfriend. Well... It's a weakness, I think. I think it's my weakness, but it is still important for me. Well, so, why is it important for me? Because, first of all, I respect my parents. Second, I rely on their opinion. When I say "their," I mostly prefer my mom's. I mean, I believe that my mom has foresight, she is an educated person. My mom gives me good advice and... (p. 46)

Throughout the interviews Mark provided examples of his tendency to go along with people or circumstances. They included the decision to get married, to immigrate, to go to school and chose a major, to move, to observe Jewish traditions, and to chose a career. Only recently did Mark make the first independent decision to change his career from accounting to programming. I could speculate that this aspect of his identity is related to two things. First, it is the lack of sense of agency. Second, his dependency issues and continued process of separation and individuation. In any case, Mark's tendency to follow others had an impact on his immigration process and adjustment.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Theme 3: Decision to immigrate - I went with the wave

> I remember everything in detail, yes. The decision was made quite fast, I believe. To tell you the truth, it was not talked about at all. Then, it was that. If, I think, I am quite sure of it, if there was no wave at that time... the beginning of nineties... end of eighties, beginning of nineties, I don't think we would have left. My parents... I mean, we were not oppressed at all... ah... there was some oppression... not a lot. (p10)

While Mark spoke later about himself and his mother as being the initiators of the immigration process, here he speaks to the larger context of this process. Thousands of Jews were leaving at the same time. Mark does not elaborate on the meaning of this process. I could speculate about their fear of losing friends and neighbors, losing the sense of community. When I think about waves at sea, I imagine that someone can ride the wave, fight it, or not go into the water at all. Mark does not speak of being powerless in this decision. This contributes to his overall positive feeling about immigrating. However, it was a decision to go along with others. Mark cannot identify personal reasons for leaving. Similarly to other decisions he made in his life, he is in a somewhat passive role.

Theme 4: I felt "normal fear" - fear of the unknown

Mark described few emotions associated with his experience of immigration. The one emotion that dominated his story was fear:

> I mean during the first moments of immigration, at first, it seems to me, I am talking about myself now, I am driven by a process, I am driven by some fear, quite normal fear, because I am dealing with things unknown to me, they are not known. And I have to get used to them somehow, to adapt. [ ] A little more than anxiety, but a little less than fear. I'll call it fear, normal fear. I think it is normal fear. [ ] I mean, a person learns something new every day, constantly interacts with someone, learns things, not to miss anything, to make the right decision, to get what others are getting, to go to important places, etc. In general, learns a lot. And he does not speak English well on top of that. That's it. (p. 11-12)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> (Mark is talking about a book on Buddhist philosophy). When a person encounters a new object, an unknown thing, he has healthy fear. Because it is an unknown for him. And he first tries to learn everything about this object, and when he is learning, he begins to have... He can reject it, he can accept it, but he is not... he already knows its shape, form, he knows what to expect from it so to speak. It's the same here. Arriving here I did not know how people live here, how they behave, how they interact. Because if this fear... I mean I already knew that I am becoming a part of this society, part of these people. So, in order to have contact with them, you have to communicate with them, I have to understand certain notions that they understand and use. But in order to have... to learn these notions, I had to understand them. That's why I am calling this first period "fear," because it is related to the unknown. (p. 13)

Later during the interview, Mark commented on the fact that this fear continues to exist currently in the form of his concerns about the future. The notion of "normal fear" fits perfectly within the literature on immigration (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Mark is taken out of his usual environment and is placed in a new and unfamiliar world. It is a sense of displacement. Whenever one encounters the unknown, anxiety is present. However, the fact that this emotion became his focus speaks more to who Mark is. As noted above, he tends to be anxious and obsessive about things in his life. While certain feelings related to the immigration process will be similar for many participants, how they differ according to their identities will be addressed later.

Mark talks about his fear as a motivational force behind the accelerated learning that happens upon arrival. He also refers to his decision to become a part of the new society. It is interesting that both Boris and Mark focus on the fear of the unknown. This raises the possibility that focusing on fear of the unknown as part of the immigration process is a gender phenomenon. As my assistant pointed out, "a man who enters a new cave wants *to know* what lies ahead." (Volynskaya, 2002, personal communication).

Theme 5: For me, immigration was a two stage process

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Upward movement. Especially during the first months of immigration. [ ] I simply drew a graph for myself. Two axes, let me explain. Two axes, "time" is on the horizontal one. On the vertical one, it's hard to define the component, it's quite inclusive, I would define it as ... (pause). Let's call it "assimilation." And something like this happens. I drew a curve that sharply goes up at first, and then it goes flat. I mean during the first moments of immigration, at first, it seems to me, I am talking about myself now, I am driven by a process, I am driven by some fear, quite normal fear, because I am dealing with things unknown to me, they are not known. And I have to get used to them somehow, to adapt... [ ] And then, gradually, all this, I think it becomes flat, the following assimilation, not because you know so much already about this country, about this culture, how people live here, not all that but, I think, because you get to a certain level and you become relatively comfortable, start feeling cozy. And this comfort stops the process of moving forward, a little, the learning. [ ] I would call this phase "adaptation." Not a good word. I'll explain what I mean. I mean you feel certain initial comfort, you feel adapting somewhat, an then there is no need to improve and that's why you stop. Bad, bad. Why? Because I, when this pyramid of Maslow hierarchical needs, there are certain physiological...(Needs?) Needs, yes, et cetera. This is the same concept.

Although Mark also refers to stages of the adjustment process, his stages differ from the ones offered by Regina. Agreeing with literature on this subject (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989), Mark focuses on the accelerated learning during the initial period. What he is not talking about are the feelings of loss and sadness. This may speak to a hypomanic defense often used by immigrants. I may speculate that it is especially difficult for Mark to recollect and focus on feelings of loss because they so much predominate his current ruminations about his wife. While Regina spoke about a continual process of "up and down" movement, Mark experiences a plateau, "adaptation." There is no question that at some point most immigrants experience an increased comfort level in their lives in the new environment. It usually speaks to regaining stability after a period of destabilization. However, Mark's negative view of this comfort level is related to who he is. His conflict about spontaneity and constraint is reflected in the above quote. In addition, as you will see below, he uses the same language to describe the second stage of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the "assimilation" process and how he felt during his marriage. It is not surprising that Mark is conflicted about "comfort." It makes you unprepared for unexpected losses. His description of the second stage also resembles his sense of being stuck in his life since his divorce.

Mark described an incident during his second semester in college. He was taking a programming class and became interested in one of the required projects. Since he was the only student in the class of 50 who completed an extra credit task, the professor asked him to explain how he did it in front of everyone.

> In those 15 minutes I went through such..., I felt so terrible, I think I went red, white, and after that I made a promise to myself. [ ] I gave myself a word that from this moment on I am beginning to seriously study English. Really, it was such a push for me. Because I went through such humiliation then, because I think in the first rows... Maybe my perception was so painful, but I think people really laughed because I simply could not put two words together. And most probably, they thought that someone helped with this project, because nobody could understand how you can do this project and not speak English. (p. 53)

Discomfort and humiliation Mark experienced was a catalyst for his decision to learn better English. It appears to me that Mark's internal view of himself as someone competent (i.e. demonstrating competence in the area of math by completing an extra credit task) was incongruent with his self-presentation and perception of others as someone who can be laughed at. His ability to use this experience as a motivation to improve rather than as an excuse to separate himself from those who laughed at him speaks to his internal resources.

### Immigration experience: here I am

Theme 6: Immigration had an impact on my confidence

To go to [college name], I mean I felt pressure... just the fact that I did not know

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> if I could do it... if I will... without knowing the language... Well, it's not important. For me it was simply... why I am saying this, it is important for me, it was for me then, because I... it was a good period of development in a sense that I had simply began to seriously believe in my abilities. (p. 3)
>
> I think if I were there, of course, I would have... I would have had fewer emotional struggles. Related to everything, to life. I don't know but for some reason I think that at age thirty in Soyuz[15] I would not have thought about what would happen with me in ten years. Here I think about it. [ ] Where I am gonna be, who I will be, with whom will I be, what I will be. (What does it mean – unpredictability or...?) [ ] It's.... no, no, no, it's not unpredictability, it's more confidence in the future. (So, by asking these questions you are confident in the future?) [ ] I have to see where I am going. Maybe that's it. I think in ten years, let's say we are talking about career, right? I want to finally acquire this ***skill set***. To feel confident. Confidence gives me many things in life. This confidence is the base of bases. I mean, if I am confident... I am standing firmly on something, I know that the decision I will make will probably be right. [ ] In order to analyze it, to base it on something, I have to stand firmly. That's why confidence for me is important. That's why I think "Will I be confident in my knowledge in ten years?" (You said, "I would not have thought about it there at age thirty." Why?) It was much easier and predetermined there. [ ] Remember I told you about fear. You know, it still exists, even now I guess. It is present. If there is fear, there is calmness. But I'll try. There is the opposite fear. Let's take calmness. Not confidence. Some kind of calm. So, in Soyuz, I had this calmness. [ ] Here, I am not calm. Let's see if it is good or bad. I don't know. On one hand, calmness is *stagnation*, I think. *Stagnation*. Lack of calm, movement... fear is movement, constant movement. Fear is the anxiety about missing something, not learning something. It's like you are not improving anymore. (p. 30-31).

As I found myself confused during the interview, I believe Mark is struggling himself to make sense of his experience. It appears to me that there are three issues here. First, it is his increased self confidence as a result of positive self efficacy experiences. Second, it is his lack of confidence as a result of the destabilizing experience of immigration. Mark is so concerned with being confident in his abilities because they provide foundation. One might speculate that he lost his "base" both upon immigrating and during his divorce. No wonder he is so conflicted about maintaining traditions that

[15] Soyuz is a frequently used abbreviation for the Soviet Union that literally means "Union."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

represent a kind of foundation his is so desperately seeking. Finally, the third issue reflected in his quote is again his internal conflict between his present and desired self: "stagnation" versus "movement."

Theme 7: My marriage and divorce played a significant role in my immigration experience

> In one word, I am trying to imagine the opposite: if I had immigrated alone, how it would have changed the events. I don't think... Fascinating question. Probably, probably, oh, I remember this, I had a big group of friends and I felt sorry for the guys who were alone. I was very happy that I was already married. [ ] I remember thinking "I am so glad I married there and I won't have to be looking hard for a mate." (To make another decision?) Make another decision. Not just making a decision, but the process itself. I felt lucky. I didn't even think about it. [ ] So I think I am much stronger now than when I was married. (p. 43)

> (Let me tell you my perception after our last conversation. I may be wrong, but... I had a similar feeling that the fact that you were married closed some questions, *struggles*, et cetera, that you are now trying to *figure out*.) Exactly, good for you, yes, many things I knew that I needed to work on them, I can't let them go, but I had some kind of feeling of, not an achieved goal, but the feeling of blagopoluchie.[16] (*Settle down*?) Yes, settle down, not a good feeling. Feeling of an average man, who does not worry about many things anymore, everything is normal and the most important, this, you know, *mindset* that nothing will change, everything will be the way it is. (p. 43)

Here we see that Mark's marriage provided a source of stability for him during times of change. He endorsed my sense that his marriage served as a buffer preventing him from dealing with conflictual feelings and internal struggles which typically accompany immigration process: "nothing will change, everything will be the way it is." As Grinberg and Grinberg noted, upon arrival "the individual has an overriding need for someone, a person or group in the new environment, to take on the maternal and containment functions that will enable him to reorganize and survive" (1989, p. 76). Mark's wife became that person. While his divorce became an opportunity to face these

[16] "Blagopoluchie" can be translated as a state of satisfaction and safety.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

struggles, it was a significant trauma and loss for him. It forced him to acknowledge the fragility of human connection and relationships.

Theme 8: Acquiring and preserving knowledge is a way to protect yourself from losses

> Here is a good example, before immigration. I didn't even know that my grandparents and parents had any money, a good amount. I only learned about it before emigration when they lost it due to inflation. [ ] So, in short, at some point a person may lose material values he owns. A person may lose everything, a person may lose home, comfort, well I don't know, cars, apartments, anything, lose it and that's all. And never get it again. And now... I mean maybe I am comparing it with the other. A person, I think, cannot lose that inner world, experience, skills that a person acquires and that make him who he is. That cannot be taken away from him. Well, only if his life is taken, he will lose it all. Why am I saying this? Because that knowledge base a person has is the most most important thing for me. [ ] Because if at some point everything is taken away from me, I will acquire it, because I will have the skills to do it, I have a potential, I have knowledge for it. And without knowledge, you can lose everything and ... forget everything. (p. 44)

There are clear parallels between Mark's experience of loss during his immigration and after his divorce. He managed to cope with the first one, only to be hit by the second one a few years later. Even before Mark's departure from Moldova he had a warning of what instability means. It is a state of unpredictability and potential losses. The only thing you are able to hold on to is your "knowledge," i.e., who you are. There was other evidence in the interview of Mark's attempts to preserve his sense of self. During our conversation about his Russianness, Mark described a conversation with an American colleague who told him, "You work too much. You got to take it easy, you have to change your mentality. You are not in Russia anymore." Mark's internal response to her was, "*Last thing that I am gonna change in this world is my mentality*" (p. 51). Mark described his pride in being a part of Russian society. "I am grateful that I was born there, not here, and left at the time when I could consciously talk about my past experience

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

there, because I believe that it really helped me" (p. 52). In addition, Mark's feelings about his accent also speak to his desire to "remain himself despite changes and restructuring" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 134).

> My accent shows that I am a Russian, of course. But my accent never concerned me and won't concern me because I believe that it's... only recently I decided whether I can get rid of my accent. I said, no, I can't and I don't want to. Because... why? Because it is my charm, it's part of me. [ ] At the beginning it was a little unpleasant. Because, it's not just that you speak with an accent, but you stand out, everyone looks at you. (p. 52)

**Jewishness: then and now**

Theme 9: Jewish traditions are important for me because they provide stability and a base

> I don't consider myself a religious man, but I honor the traditions of Judaism. In what way? ... I go to a synagogue sometimes. I, my grandmother died here. I try to go to her grave. Do you understand what I mean by traditions? I am generally, tradition... (Traditions as rituals?) Yes, yes, that's it, we thought of the same thing together. Traditions were created over the years. I mean traditions, I don't know if tradition is the right word, but in my understanding of tradition, it is something that came to us from the past, it is stable, born in the past, it came to us. It stood firmly. It seems to me that it has a base, some roots. So, you see, if I am not accepting, I accept this tradition because I believe that if it is standing firmly, it came through, it was polished by time...(It was tested?) Yes, it was tested, yes, exactly. If people worship it, it works, it is stable, it is strong. If I don't like it, if I find it to be nonsense, I try to admire it quietly. I think I will understand it later. Time worked on it - it is worth it. If I don't see it, it is due to my lack of understanding. So in that sense I am conservative. But generally, from a different point of view, I am not conservative. I mean I deal well with changes. And again, as I said, bad changes are changes too, and at the end they are good changes because it's hard, hard to know if they are good while you are here... If you are here all the time, it becomes your daily life. (p. 17-18)

It is not surprising that Mark is justifying his desire and tendency to follow Jewish traditions with thoughts about "stability," "base," and "roots." This speaks to his need to be grounded. Without prompting, Mark also brings up the issues about being conservative and dealing with change. Horowitz' (2000) notion of personal and relational

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

aspects of one's subjective Jewishness seems applicable here. Mark's experience of being Jewish is connected to his sense of himself as someone who needs external sources of validation and stability.

Theme 10: I belong to a great nation and feel privileged

> My grandparents spoke fluent Moldavian, spoke bad Russian, but an OK Ukrainian. We always had people of different nationalities in the house. Having said that, there was something in the air that reminded me about my belonging to the nation, Jewish nation. I considered myself special. Like when people pray and thank God for creating them as Jews, rather than some other nationality, so that feeling of specialness, of privilege, I always felt that. I believe that I have a privilege of belonging to this nation. (p. 36-37)

> [To be a Jew means] not to say bad things about the nation, to be a patriot to some extent. (What does it mean to be a patriot?) Well, hypothetically speaking... For example, the situation in the Middle East is not very good right now. I think... well, it's a rhetorical question... I don't know. Anyway, if necessary, if there is a big problem and there is a need for soldiers, like will you go or not to Israel. I think that I will go. I THINK that I will. Something like that. (p. 20-21)

Mark's sense of being Jewish has more to do with ethnic, cultural, and affective ties to the nation than religious identification and practice. Mark clearly has many positive feelings about being Jewish. They stem from his experience growing up with this maternal grandparents who were a great influence in his life. It is not surprising that Mark has difficulty providing many details. As some may speak about acquiring the sense of belonging through "mother's milk," he received it through the "air." Mark's tone and affect speaks louder than words. However, his refusal to talk about Jewish stereotypes may mean that he has some negative experiences also. Mark barely mentions experience of his parents with anti-Semitism. It is hard for me to imagine that he had no such experiences himself. However, Mark's inability to reflect on any conflictual feelings he has about his Jewishness fits well with his overall struggle to resolve internal conflicts.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Another aspect of Mark's internal conflict centers around the issues of marrying a Jew. It is important to him despite his intellectual disagreement with this notion.

> I was always raised that I could not marry a girl who was not of Jewish background. I think it is demented, but I can't go against it. I am sure in the history of my family there were temptations and they stood their ground. That's why I don't want to be the first person who did not resist the temptation and broke the tradition. All this is the product of upbringing. It was all on non-verbal level. Personally, I think it is not normal, not right, but I think it has to be that way. (p. 18)

> I will be very subjective here. I said that traditions are important for me. Traditions that are not only religious. They are traditions of the people. You have to honor them. A person who does not understand the suffering of the people, who does not belong, who cannot be empathic... I need solidarity. That's it. It is important for me that my wife shared my views. If it has nothing to do with traditions, especially if she can argue her reasons well, I would change to her side myself. It does not matter. But there are things that are very important for me - traditions, belonging to the nation. If I don't feel supported, but.. the opposition is out of the question. And if I don't feel support, I... I mean neutrality is not enough for me. I need support. (p. 20)

Once again, Mark is not able to make an independent decision based on his convictions. He follows the traditions and his parents' or grandparents' wishes in a non-reflective way. When Mark comments about needing "solidarity," I can almost hear his anxiety about his potential partner having a different opinion. This difference of opinions may potentially lead to a conflict and loss.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Natasha**
**"I want to fit in. I don't like to stand out."**

*Natasha is an attractive young woman who looks younger than her stated age. She has short dark hair and dark eyes. Natasha was casually dressed in jeans and sports coat and carried a cell phone and organizer. From the moment we met, she impressed me as someone who is Americanized, including her appearance. We met twice in Starbucks on the Upper West Side of Manhattan where she lives. She was friendly and relaxed, yet guarded about certain personal details. Most of the time she focused on her thoughts rather than feelings. Natasha preferred speaking Russian during the interview because she did not want to be understood by those around us. She tended to speak Russian without interspersing it with English words. However, on closer examination she often included phrases in Russian which were constructed according to English grammatical rules. During our conversations after the interviews, Natasha spoke English. She focused particularly on the issue of dating and serious relationships.*

Natasha is a 30 year-old single woman who lives in Manhattan. She has a BA in linguistics from a university in Russia and one year of MBA training from a college in Alaska. She also completed 9 months training in programming. Natasha currently works for a well-known consulting firm in their advance technology group. She described herself as a person who enjoyed every profession she has worked in. Natasha enjoys her current work because it is well regarded by others and provides stability in the job market. She has many American friends with whom she goes out. Natasha is currently not in a relationship, but dates frequently. She spoke spontaneously several times about dating and complained about difficulty finding a man with whom she is interested enough to be involved in a serious relationship. She reflected on her tendency to date men who chose

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her, rather than the ones she is attracted to. When asked to define closeness, Natasha changed the topic. Later on she expressed her fear of being alone in the future. She is also contemplating moving to another city to have a better quality of life.

### My immigration journey: from there to here

Although Natasha immigrated to the United States with her family as a refugee at age 25 from Russia 5 years ago, she first came to the US at age 21 for college study. She grew up and went to college in a small cosmopolitan[17] city in Siberia which had an exchange program with a university in Alaska. Natasha first attended a year of undergraduate studies there. She spoke about feeling immediately more comfortable in the US than in Russia. She enjoyed the freedom of choice and the more respectful attitude towards women. She especially liked the privacy and more personal space she had here. Even at that time Natasha reported already feeling better as a person in the United States. Although she denied any adjustment hardships, she reflected on some difficulties with English and cultural differences.

During Natasha's stay in Alaska, she visited her uncle and his family who lived in New Jersey and submitted an application for herself and her parents to INS for immigration. One of her mentors in Alaska suggested that she apply for an MBA program, which she did and was accepted. After completing a year in her MBA program, Natasha was invited to an immigration interview with the US embassy. She came back to Russia and received a job with the Russian division of a large American bank in Moscow.

---

[17] Although the majority of the city population was Asian, there was a large settlement of more educated residents from other republics of the former USSR.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Natasha worked there as a financial specialist for a year while waiting for her immigration paperwork to go through. She did not remember any problems related to leaving Russia, except for trying to convince her parents to leave many material things behind.

Natasha said that she felt lucky to have been able to immigrate to the United States because of the kind of life she has. Upon immigrating in 1995, she lived briefly in New Jersey before moving to Manhattan. Her uncle helped somewhat with logistical details. However, Natasha believed that he was not acculturated enough to provide other important information for them. She received some help from UJA, a Jewish philanthropic agency. Natasha spoke in detail about her conflict with a volunteer who was helping to edit her resume. While the volunteer insisted that she apply for a secretarial job, Natasha asserted trying to find a position more consistent with her experience. In the end, not to upset the volunteer, she worked on two separate resumes. Although she was looking for a job similar to her experience at the bank in Moscow, Natasha's first job was as a project manager in the financial industry, a position with more of an administrative focus. She attributed taking this job to her lack of understanding of what it involved. After a while, Natasha decided to change her field of work to computers. She continued learning new computer languages in order to stay competitive within the market.

While Natasha again had difficulty talking about any adjustment problems during that period, she acknowledged her sense of insecurity about having no friends at that time. She also spoke about feeling "stupid" due to her lack of knowledge or information about small details of American life, such as buying hair conditioner designed for Black people or difficulty understanding a restaurant menu. Natasha reported still feeling sensitive about her accent. During her stay in Alaska, she felt that she could not express herself

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

adequately in English. However, over time she felt shy about her accent because she did not want to stand out or feel weird.

Natasha immediately made friends with Americans through her work and social contacts. She did not interact much with the Russian immigrant community, nor did she date any immigrants. In terms of her own process of adjustment, as noted above, Natasha stated that she liked American life immediately. However, she acknowledged a gradual process of learning about the reality and limitations of the American educational system, racial discrimination and poverty, and long work hours. In addition, Natasha reported that over time she lost touch with her friends from Russia. She did not go back to visit because of her lack of interest.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

When asked to reflect on the impact the immigration process had on her as a person, Natasha spoke about being able to be who she wanted to be and to do what she wanted to do. As noted above, she mentioned several times that she felt more herself in the US. Natasha also felt more confident about her ability to achieve her goals and described feeling more at home here. She attributed this feeling to her preference for more privacy and personal space. For example, Natasha emphasized that she does not feel abnormal in the US because she is still single. She stated that had she stayed in Russia, she would have been seen as a lesbian, a loser, or a freak. However, when pressed to identify what she calls "home," Natasha stated that she did not feel at home anywhere. She enjoys the freedom of not being attached to places or material things. Natasha also emphasized the importance of having a diverse and cosmopolitan experience as an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigrant.

Natasha acknowledged that the importance she places on stability and security is related to her immigration experience. She stated that the process of moving to another country, or moving in general, reminded her of the fact that things are not permanent. She spoke about feelings of uncertainty. Natasha remembered how her parents lost all their savings due to inflation in Russia.

While Natasha acknowledges her Russian background, she stated that she did not feel patriotic. She reported feeling good about receiving her education in Russia and being able to speak another language. When asked to project herself into the future, Natasha stated that she would teach her children Russian only because it is easier for her. She reported having mixed feelings about Brighton Beach. On one hand, she considers it to be a more "normal ghetto" than other ethnic enclaves in New York. Natasha attributes it to the ability of the Russian community to prosper. On the other hand, this community reminds her of the lack of privacy and tendency toward gossip she left in Russia.

Although she has a few Russian acquaintances, Natasha complained about their tendency to avoid close relationships with Americans. She believes that they feel superior to Americans and do not try to get to know them. She appeared to resent their habit of talking about things, rather than being active. Natasha considers herself to be an American because she lives here and feels better here. However, she identifies her background depending on the situation. For example, she would call herself a "Russian" while in France because of the supposed negative attitudes towards Americans.

Natasha described four types of Russian immigrants according to their integration in the US. The first type are immigrants who came as children and have little connection

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to Russia. The second type are young people who are not acclimated at all to American society. She believes that they have interpersonal problems and would have had problems in Russia also. The third type, noted above, are immigrants who speak English well, know the culture, and have good jobs, but do not have any relationships with Americans. Natasha also described "new Russians," the fourth type of Russians who have a lot of money and feel comfortable everywhere, while not belonging anywhere. She did not identify the group she sees herself fitting in to best.

### Jewishness: then and now

According to Natasha, she grew up in a family where Jewishness did not matter. She described her experience as cosmopolitan, i.e. living in an academic, cultured environment where she interacted with people of various ethnic groups. Natasha reported that her mother was always concerned about anti-Semitism and believed that people think negatively about Jews. When she was about nine years-old, Natasha remembered an encounter with an Asian woman who made a negative comment about her being Jewish. Although she denied any negative feelings at the time, Natasha reported asking her parents to choose a different nationality to record in her passport at age 16. She stated that she did not feel ashamed, but only wanted an easier life for herself. Now Natasha regrets asking her parents because one should not hide his or her background. She reported another negative experience with anti-Semitism while in college. Natasha felt betrayed by an ethnically Russian friend who made a negative remark about her Jewishness.

When asked about the meaning of being Jewish now, Natasha first told me that it meant nothing. Then she elaborated that she thinks of her Jewishness as her background

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and ethnicity, not religion. Natasha spoke about her appearance as being "non-Russian." She also insisted that she is anti-religious and is very open about it. While her mother continues to try to set her up with Russian Jewish men, Natasha does not find them attractive or interesting. She tends to be attracted to Irish men with the "boy-next-door" looks.

Although Natasha acknowledged the importance of the history of the Holocaust for her, she insisted that it is not due to her family history or her Jewishness. In general, she knows very little about her family background. One of her grandparents was arrested. Natasha speculated that it was possible that the arrest was related to his Jewish identification. However, she also described him as an idealistic communist who might have gotten himself in trouble criticizing the communist party.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF NATASHA: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: Closeness is the dance I do.

Natasha's story is full of references to her preoccupation with the spoken and unspoken themes of relationships, personal space, and closeness. Even the interview itself reflected her struggle between her wish to be closer and her tendency to keep the distance. Throughout my interactions with Natasha I had an image of a beautiful wall between us. I liked Natasha and her positive outlook on life and apparent openness. Yet, eventually I realized that she barely let me enter her inner world. A good example is our conversation about closeness. When I first asked Natasha to define "closeness," she changed the topic. Only after my continuous prompting, she provided the following answer:

> [Natasha describes with excitement a recent play she attended at the Tenement House Museum] It was like a dance. First, it's like everything happens around you. You walk through these rooms, not like you are sitting in a theater and you are shown something on the stage, but you walk into these rooms and there are dancers around you. It's hard to describe, it's very unusual... First, they all are moving beautifully, but 80 percent of it is theater, but at the same time they are not talking much, but a lot is expressed. So, it's really about such closeness of relationships. [ ] (What does it mean for you, closeness?) To tell you the truth, I don't know because, like I said, I've never had such a relationship and I don't do it so well. I guess the question is "Who does it well," right? And by the way, the thing I was talking about, not a dance and not a play, why it touched me, because there was a young woman, a central character. The story was that she pretended that things were one way in her life, while they were really in a different way. [ ] There was a man who loved her but she pushed him away. [ ] And there was a group of people who make her look at her life realistically, she does not want to, but they make her... [ ] And at the end she understands that she pushed him away, that there were no real barriers to their relationship except for, that she believed that she never loved him and that's why she pushed him away, but in reality she was afraid to get close to him. (p. 59-60)

When I think of dancing with a partner, I imagine "dancing with," a joint movement of approach and separation, mutual and rhythmic. My interview with Natasha reminded me of a school dance with the required space between partners. In her case, I kept trying to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

get closer and she kept pulling away. Was I "making her look at her life realistically," while she did not want to? Why does she need to "pretend?" Is she afraid of something, and if so, what?

Natasha's description of this theater performance provides an excellent metaphor for Natasha's view of relationships and closeness. Relationships are confusing and difficult to understand rationally. On one hand, "everything happens around you" and you appear to be a participant. On the other hand, the dancers/actors are performing, i.e. pretending to be someone else. Is Natasha an active participant in a relationship or an observer? As she told me about dating only men who chose her, rather than those she chose, I again wondered about her fear of closeness. This passivity stands in contrast to her overall theme of being active. By not investing in relationships emotionally, she may be trying to avoid potential pain. However, at this point in her life, Natasha has a sense that something is lacking.

> (A big part of who you are and what you are worried about is the question about your future partner...) [she interrupts me] Not that it worries me the most, it's just I am concerned about two things: health and work. I am healthy right now and I found a job, and now that is one thing left. (Well, it is an absolutely normal developmental stage...) Well, for more normal people than I am it happens at an earlier age. I am only now dealing with it, but I guess it varies. [ ] I think people usually have such relationships at age 25. When I was 25, I didn't need it. (p. 59)

Another part of being in an intimate relationship has to do with social norms and Natasha's perception of herself. She wishes to have a relationship because other people already have it. Natasha even forgets that at age 25 she just immigrated to the US and may have been preoccupied with other issues. She identifies what is normal and desperately wants to conform to that definition. This theme of "normality" and fitting in will reemerge throughout her story.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Theme 2: I try to look at the bright side and not to get upset.

Not surprisingly, Natasha's preferred way to approach the world, i.e. defense mechanism, is to avoid and rationalize her negative feelings.

> With age you think, even if you are going through rough times, it does not cloud your horizon, it's like, it's just a difficult moment, but you know that it will pass and in a month you won't even remember about... why you were so upset at that moment. It helps you not to take seriously the little things that right now, those difficulties you are having at the present moment. [ ] I think that when you are young, when you experience something for the first time, and when you have difficulty for the first time, you feel that your life is over and everything is terrible and it will not get better. And later, when you get through, and it happens a couple times, then you remember that you went through it already, that it was terrible but it ended in a way that not only it was not that terrible in a month, but after a couple of months you, for example, you thought that maybe it was for the best. (p. 40)

> I think if I lived there [in Russia]... I am a type of person that even if I am in an unpleasant situation, later on I realize that I somehow lied to myself, but I usually adapt and think how much I like it. If I was living there, I would have also felt great, but I would have been pretending to myself... (p. 29)

It is almost as if Natasha can "will" the bad feelings away. By not taking things seriously in the moment, by pretending to herself, she transforms her negative feelings into something else and forgets them. Similar to her confusion about closeness, Natasha is struggling to separate her real feelings from the "pretend" ones. As I will attempt to demonstrate below, Natasha negotiates her immigration experience using the same defense mechanisms.

## My immigration journey: from there to here

Theme 3: Immigrating was not hard, but at first I felt like an idiot.

> (What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of immigration?) I think I got lucky because I had such an opportunity. I really like it. (pause) I am

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> sorry I couldn't do it earlier, but the question is that... When I start thinking that way, I immediately think of people who couldn't do it at all. I mean, to regret something, to regret that your life is the way it is, it does not make any sense. (p. 11)

> (What things were difficult?) When I came here? Honestly, I know that I shouldn't probably answer like that, but I don't remember that we had VERY difficult things. I remember that everything that we didn't have, it was never that difficult that I would think, "poor me, why did I move?" I remember that everything that happened, I always thought, it is still better than if I was still there. Like it is nothing compared to... I mean the difficulty that I had were more personal. Like I didn't have friends. I remember when I first moved, I was dating someone who had many friends. And all the friends that I had were his friends. And I constantly felt not guilty, because it is not my fault, but something like I am a failure, I felt some kind of insecurity that I don't have such circle of friends. (p. 13)

> Because I was already an adult, I approached things more realistically. I was not worried about some things that may have worried me more, especially in terms of immigration. What things worry you? That you do not become a part of the society like other people. And I think that in younger age, it is more, it bothers you more than in my age, it's not as important for me now. (p. 40)

As noted above, Natasha cannot allow herself to feel bad, to worry, or to have regrets because it would challenge her positive experience and introduce ambivalence and confusion. Here again we see her mantra, "everything is for the best!" However, Natasha is able to acknowledge her concern about others' perceptions of her. She wants to fit in and be a part of something. However, she believes that the only way to fit in is to be the same. While nowhere in the interview Natasha spoke about loneliness, sadness, or nostalgia, I would speculate that her comment about not having friends may reflect these feelings.

> There were many things... but most of all... It's like the feeling that you feel like the last dimwit because you don't know little things. You don't know, I don't know, like... well like something related to electricity, or you don't know what something is called and because of that you can't find it. [ ] Or when you are with someone and you don't know what something is called. You go to a restaurant, let's say, and you don't know like, everyone orders something and you don't really

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> know what's what. It's like you know all the words, but it is not about understanding the words, but in what you know what's what. [ ] It's simply that which is a part of your environment; you don't notice it like you don't notice air you breathe. You begin to notice that, really, it is not like air and it is not natural to know all these things. The problem is not in that you don't know what to do and where to go, but that you don't know where to find out how to do it or where to find it. That's the hardest thing. (p. 41-42)

Natasha provides a beautiful description of the importance of the non-human environment and culture in the immigration process. We internalize culture and environment as much as we internalize good and bad human objects (Gehrie, 1979). It is like the air your breath - you only notice it when you do not have it. Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) note that the non-human environment is invested with intense emotional content and comes to represent a significant part of a person's sense of identity. Natasha feels uneasy because those things that she took for granted are now missing or changed. She knows the words, but cannot understand the meaning. In addition, similar to Mark and Boris, Natasha focuses on "not knowing" as the major difficulty upon arrival. Although she does not verbalize it, she is also wishing for someone to guide her in this unknown territory. Later in the interview, when asked to provide advice to other new immigrants, Natasha spoke emphatically about finding a mentor. Another element of her concern regarding the unknown is that "not knowing" is equivalent to her being a "dimwit," it reflects negatively on her self perception.

> I was also shy about my accent, I remember. I mean, I don't know if it is a factor of immigration or that my parents raised me this way, I was always a shy girl, and still am. But I guess if it wasn't it, it would have been something else. [ ] (Was it about feeling different, standing out?) Yes, maybe, maybe, maybe (smiling). Yes, I remember that the guy I was dating, he grew up *in tri-state area*, he went to a school, Notre Dame, anywhere he went, he would start talking with his friends about their schools. [ ] I thought that everyone was like he and his friends. Not that they were snobs, but certainly ignorant about other people. (p. 14)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

While Natasha rejects the notion of immigration being a difficult process, she identifies a number of adjectives to describe her perception of herself or how others may see her: "failure," "abnormal," "dimwit," and "different." Such feelings are not unusual among recently arrived immigrants. I certainly remember my own feelings of insecurity about my accent or embarrassment over cultural mishaps. Yet, I believe that Natasha arrived in this country with a pre-existing vulnerability in this regard. It is possible that her early experiences as a Jew in Russia played a role here. Being "the other," or different, may elicit a number of responses, one of which could the wish to blend in and fit in.

## Immigration experience: here I am

Theme 4: Immigration provided an opportunity for me to be myself and feel more confident.

> (How do you think immigration affected you as a person?) I don't think it made me into a different person. I think it gave me the opportunity to be who maybe I wanted to be. That's what I was saying earlier, there is more freedom here. I mean I do more what I want to do than what life would have made me do. I think. I feel better as a person here. [ ] It is somewhat difficult to say which part of it about growing up, maturing. But I think I am more self confident, more ... (pause) well, I am calmer, I approach life better, I like life better. I don't feel that I am doing something that life is making me do; I feel that I am doing what I want. (p. 29)

> To some extent, really, you can say, "I want to do one, two, and three" - and do it. Of course, there could always be some unforeseen circumstances. You can get hit by a bus tomorrow. But excluding that, you can do something. Over there it's somewhat more... You have to live within the boundaries of your abilities or ... I don't know. Whom you know or... Well, it's important here also, whom you know. But over there it limits you more than here. To a much larger degree. (p. 13)

It is interesting that Natasha begins by saying that immigration did not make her into a different person. This speaks to the importance of continuity and persistent

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sameness within oneself in spite of changes as an expression of one's personal identity (Akhtar, 1999; Erikson, 1959, 1987). Similar to Regina, Natasha proceeds to focus on the opportunity to be herself. While Regina focuses on "disappearing," or defining her own identity, Natasha's emphasis is on doing what she wants to do and not being forced by life. From a sociological perspective, Natasha speaks about the differences in the two societies. To some extent the notion of the American society providing more freedom of opportunity is certainly true. However, it is equally true that social connections play an important role in one's professional and personal development. The difference here, however, is that a young immigrant's parents cannot provide such connections. Therefore, Natasha and other young Russian immigrants are pushed to pursue their own path relying on their own abilities.

Theme 5: I like living in America - it fits me.

Similar to Regina, Natasha made her own decision to immigrate. It was a decision based on her personal experience in Alaska, an experience of comfort and fit. In addition, when she immigrated, she came to a place that was both new and "old," i.e. a place she tried and liked. This may explain, in part, her comfort and ease of adaptation, as compared to other participants.

> I think I am more myself than I would have been there. In general, I realized a long time ago, it's not really fair to say, but I was going to say that I think I was more, even though I spent more time there, I think I am more adapted to life here than to life there. I feel myself more at home here than there. [ ] For example, when I first came to Alaska, I immediately realized that I felt more comfortable. I never could understand why. And then I realized that in spite of the fact that I grew up there, I always had big *personal space*. And people over there always stood VERY close to each other. It is a small fact, but it is so important, it puts pressure on you. I remember that when I went back and was waiting for an interview so that I could come here, it was really irritating me. I remember going to a doctor and standing in line to pick up your chart with people hearing every

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> word the woman was asking you, very personal questions. (p. 29)
>
> With my personal life, I mean right now it is not happening here, but it is so much easier here. Nobody looks at you like you are abnormal or something. I mean it was terrible there, I don't know when you left, but it is not even that people will say things behind your back; they would have told you things straight in your face. They would have told you that there is something wrong with you, that you are failure, that either you want too much, or that you are lesbian, or something... A normal woman has to get married at a certain age. (p. 12)

Natasha chose to immigrate because she perceived that the new environment fit her sense of herself as someone who values privacy and personal space. Again, the themes of closeness and otherness appear to intermingle. "Personal space" can be a metaphor for the emotional distance between people. I wondered if Natasha's discomfort over being heard by others during the interview was in part related to this dynamic. When asked to speculate about the reasons for her preferences for larger personal space, Natasha spoke about her family culture being "loving," but without outward expressions of affection. As I noted in the literature review, the concept of optimal distance (Akhtar, 1992, 1999) is considered to be of particular importance in understanding the process of immigration and its impact on identity.

In terms of the immigration process, Akhtar states that at the external level, optimal distance refers to spatial proximity, as well as the distance from the homeland. It is interesting that Natasha both enjoys larger personal space and has no interest in visiting Russia. At the internal level the movement towards optimal distance refers to an immigrant's native self-representation and the newly required one. One of the most notable impressions Natasha left with me was of someone who is Americanized and has no interactions or desire to interact with other Russian immigrants. Rather than integrating her native and new self-representations, Natasha believes that her "American" sense of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

herself was always there and simply became a norm upon immigration. Akhtar would identify Natasha as someone who experienced "counterphobic assimilation," an outcome of her inability to navigate the process of integrating the two self-representations. I am not sure that this term describes adequately Natasha's experience. I believe that she chose the path of avoidance and separation which is congruent with how she views herself. Trying to interact with other Russian immigrants and to integrate this into her life would be too confusing and painful for her. Being an American fits her identity and world view. Natasha is striving to fit in and not stand out. However, Natasha's comfort with larger personal space may be changing. At this point in her life she wants to fill it with a relationship.

Theme 6: Since I immigrated, stability and security are important for me.

Once again and not surprisingly, the theme of stability emerges as part of the immigration experience.

> (Is it [stability and security] related to immigration?) I think it is VERY related. I think when you move somewhere and some things that you always thought to be natural, just occurrences, the way the world is. And then you see that there are very few permanent things, and that you really cannot depend on anything. I think immigration opens your eyes. [ ] You have this feeling of uncertainty. For example, people think that if I work with computers, that everyone wants me and that everything is always going to be fine. I don't feel that way. I think that it's OK now, but nobody knows what will happen tomorrow. Not just in my profession. There will be another recession and everything will be terrible. So, it's difficulty for me to look at things as if it is fine. [ ] I believe that immigration affected it greatly, that it opens your eyes on the fact that things are... more like a result of circumstances. (p. 55-56)

This is the closest Natasha comes to acknowledging loss. She speaks about her sense of impermanence, instability, and uncertainly following immigration. If you lose everything once, nothing is taken for granted in the future.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I have this feeling now that I don't have a home. I have a house where I live, but I don't really settle there. In general, I have this wonderful theory now, not theory but my own personal *trend*. That I am trying to own as few things as possible, to have more freedom, than to be attached to one place. [ ] I think it's just simpler to think about life. I think things somehow own you a little, if you start buying too much, you have to take care of them, put them somewhere, chose which one to use now, it's just too complicated. (p. 48)

As Natasha talks about freedom and her desire not to be attached to things or places, I could not help but think about her difficulties with closeness. In a similar way, she is afraid to get attached to another person whom she will have to chose, take care of, and find a place for in her heart. She is afraid because attachment and closeness may mean loss and separation. It makes sense that Natasha was trying to convince her parents to leave the material things behind. She did not need anything because she did not want to feel loss.

### Jewishness: then and now

Theme 7: I had some negative experiences as a Jew in Russia.

> [Natasha describes her first experience of realizing that she was Jewish. She knew she was Jewish from having to identify her nationality on a number of documents, including a library card. When she was about 10 years-old, she was walking down the street and met a woman with a child.] I am sure that she was an Ossetian, because she told me. I don't know why I remember her nationality. She had a baby carriage and... She should have been ashamed of herself. She saw me and because I obviously had dark skin, meaning that I am not Russian, she immediately asked me, "What nationality are you, little girl?" She probably thought that I was also of some Caucasian[18] nationality. I said that I was a Jew. And she told me right away that "it's too bad, because... because Jews are such, they can be such bad, not good people." (p. 26)

Consistent with who she is, Natasha denied any negative feelings after that interchange, stating simply that it was strange. However, her comment about the woman

[18] In this case, Caucasian refers to those from the region of Caucasus, such as Georgians, Armenians, or Azeri.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

having to feel ashamed expresses some anger. As noted in her story, Natasha attempted to change her nationality in her passport at age 16. She denied feeling shame, but rather focused on her wish to have an easier life. I would guess that her mother's "paranoia" about anti-Semitism and her own daily experiences contributed to Natasha's negative feelings about her Jewishness. She described an experience of betrayal by her best friend based on anti-Semitism during her college years. In contrast to other participants who had positive experiences from their parents or grandparents, Natasha did not have that. In general, she knew very little about her family's background. It is clear that Natasha always felt as "the other," dark and different, and always wanted to fit in. One may speculate that this feeling was reactivated upon immigration. Her attraction to a "boy-next-door" type of man, blond and Irish, may also speak to her desire to blend in, if only through a relationship.

Theme 8: Jewishness does not mean a lot to me.

The two themes are connected. Natasha cannot integrate negative experiences and, therefore, rejects them.

> It [being Jewish] does not mean much to me. We did not talk about it in my family. I know that many Jewish families, at least those I know, are very well educated and things like that. I guess I like thinking about it, but it's somewhat hard... Perhaps, because I don't... I don't think that it is such a big part of, or it's a big part of me, it's hard for me to be proud of it. [ ] I never heard anything positive about it. I guess, except for the fact that when I came here and UJA was sort of ... I mean that it helped me to some extent to come here - that's a positive moment. But besides that, I didn't have, of course, anything positive from it. I mean people in Russia, many of them, made bad comments about it. [Continues to describe betrayal by her friend mentioned above] (p. 21-22)

> Well, since here it [Jewishness] means religion a little bit, that's why when someone asks me, I say that ethnically yes, but not religiously, I don't belong to any religion. [ ] (What does it mean? Only that your passport stated, that your parents were Jews...) Well, yes, but also that ethnically you can tell by looking at

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> me that I am not Russian, for example, right? I mean I don't have a pug nose or blond hair and blue eyes. (p. 23-24)
>
> Ethnically, it's my background. It's like... What does your race mean? It does not mean much in a global sense, except for yourself. If you are, let's say, black, why would you write that you are white? It does not mean anything to you, but nevertheless, why do you have to apologize for it? (p. 28)

As a child and an adolescent, Natasha experienced anti-Semitism, as well as her mother's concerns regarding people's negative views of Jews in Russia. While she does not hide her Jewishness and does not apologize for it, she dismisses it. Similar to many participants, Natasha is focused on appearance and compares her Jewishness to the concept of race. It is something that's written on your face, so to speak, and cannot be deleted, unless you marry a non-Jew and try to blend in. According to the literature, one way to cope with an internalized ambivalence about one's Jewishness is to avoid or reject it. It is important to note that Natasha grew up in a cosmopolitan environment which also contributed to her lack of interest in Jewishness and Jewish identification.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Lena**
**"I want to be myself but also to fit in."**

*Lena is an attractive young woman who looks her stated age. She is of medium height, and has dark hair and eyes. Lena was friendly and relaxed during both interview sessions. While she talked less during the second interview, it appeared to be related to the fact that she told me most of her story during the first session. She kissed me good bye and had no problems scheduling. Lena was not only open with me, but also showed passion in relating her story. She commented that the first interview was like a confession and that it felt great to tell the whole story to someone else. Lena spoke Ruglish, Russian with many English words and phrases interspersed. After the interviews she was interested in learning about me, my husband, and our relationship. Lena said that she was always curious about intercultural couples and how such relationships work.*

Lena is a 26 year-old married woman who lives in New Jersey with her husband. She recently graduated from college with a degree in marketing and now works as a client manager for an advertising company. She has been married for four and a half years to a Russian immigrant who also works in business. Lena stated that her life has become more stable during the last couple of years, as compared to the years immediately following immigration. While she likes her job, she also enjoys volunteering for an organization helping blind and visually impaired people because she likes giving back to the community. Lena enjoys reading in English and spending time with her Russian friends. Since both sets of parents live in Brooklyn, Lena and her husband visit them regularly. They recently began thinking about having children. When asked why they decided to live in New Jersey, Lena spoke about her sense of discomfort living in Brooklyn among other Russian immigrants because she felt like an immigrant herself. Being an immigrant meant that she

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was not part of American society. Lena commented on her sense that she does not get excited by things in her life. She wondered whether it was age-related or had something to do with her immigration experience.

### My immigration journey: from there to here

Lena came to New York at age 18 on her own from a small industrial city in Ukraine on a student visa to attend a yeshiva 8 years ago She stated that she had always wanted to go abroad and see the world. Lena reported that the origins of this desire were in her interactions with a private English tutor and with foreign students during her stay in an international summer camp. However, having experienced anti-Semitism, by age 17 she wanted something more than just to see the world. She decided to emigrate from the former USSR to have a better life as a Jew. In addition, when her home town was opened to foreigners by the government, Lena met with her parents' friends living in the US and Israel. They first tried to convince her father to immigrate. When he rejected their insistence, Lena became the focus of their discussions. After meeting an American rabbi and his wife who came to her city to develop Jewish religious and community programs, Lena became interested in Judaism and Jewish history. When the rabbi made an offer to her to attend a yeshiva in New York on a scholarship, she jumped at the opportunity. To relieve her anxiety about the level of religiosity at the school, the rabbi told her that it was a yeshiva for those interested in history and knowledge rather than religion. Although she told her parents that she was going there only to study and that she would come back, Lena knew that she wanted to stay in the US permanently.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

During the first six months, Lena was completely absorbed in her life at the yeshiva. She made friends with other Russian students there. Although she was interested in Jewish history and culture, Lena felt that she was pretending to be a "real" Jew by observing the rituals required at the yeshiva. She stated that she resented having to go to services and wear appropriate clothing. She believed that she could have a relationship with God without so many rules and regulations. Lena felt that the real purpose behind bringing Russian students on scholarships was to turn them into Orthodox Jews. After six months in the US, Lena visited her parents and finally told them that she was going to stay there for good. Her mother was shocked and worried, while her father was supportive.

Lena left the yeshiva after one year, rented a room in Brighton Beach area, applied for political asylum and got a job in a Russian grocery store. She received some help from her parents' friends living in Brooklyn. Lena described the next year as the most difficult in her immigration experience. She was lonely, had no close friends, and could not go to college because of her legal, or rather illegal, status in the US. Lena described herself as depressed and isolated. She desperately wanted to get married in order to have someone close to her. She also believed that she became more spiritual and connected to God at that time. Lena spoke about having conversations with God which helped her to survive. She described a turning moment in her experience when she accidentally became pregnant during that time. Lena always relied on her father to provide her with advice and information. When she asked him for guidance in this situation, her father did not know what to tell her. Lena stated that she realized for the first time that she could only rely on herself. Typical of their previous relationship, her father was supportive but critical. While she even considered going back to Ukraine, she was able to get an abortion and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

continue her adjustment process. Lena did not want to go back and admit her weakness because it would have disappointed her parents.

After about a year in the US, Lena's mother came to visit her in New York. Having seen the difficult conditions of her daughter's job, Lena's mother used her Russian social connections from Ukraine to help Lena get a better job in a doctor's office. It is there that Lena was introduced to her future husband on a blind date. They connected immediately, moved in together within six months, and married within a year and a half. Lena stated that meeting her husband and marrying him was the best thing that ever happened to her. Finally she was no longer alone as she had her own family, as well as her husband's family and friends. She felt that her husband brought back the best parts of her that were hidden as a result of difficult personal experiences.

Lena also felt that beginning college at that time was another turning point for her. She loved going to school, interacting with students, and being part of something she enjoyed. Since Lena was always interested in business, following her father's footsteps, she took various business classes and settled on marketing. However, she had to stop school because they moved to Philadelphia in order for her husband to go to business school. Although Lena had some resentment about having to stop school and having to work to support her husband, she did not want to feel sorry for herself. She knew that this move was important for her husband and would provide a better quality of life for their family in the future. Lena enjoyed living in a more Americanized area and working in a similar environment. While at first she felt disconnected from the "water cooler" conversations of her coworkers, eventually Lena learned more about American culture and society and became more comfortable. She also took some classes at a local university.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

After her husband received his MBA, they moved back and settled in New Jersey. Lena was able to continue and finish her undergraduate studies.

Two years ago Lena's parents immigrated to the US. They were resistant to the move for a long time. Lena was not sure what pushed them to finally move. A few months before their move, she came to visit to help them with their preparations and to see her friends and the city. Lena described her trip as disappointing. She felt that her friends did not change at all, they were still dependent on their parents or husbands, while she was quite different. She had nothing in common with them. While Lena stated that she would not want to go back right now, she would like to visit again in the future because of her wish to stay connected to her roots.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

Lena believes that immigration process had a significant impact on her as a person. Her life changed completely, she learned about herself, and matured. Because she had to survive on her own, Lena feels proud of her accomplishments. She also credits her immigration experience with becoming more faithful and understanding more about Judaism. However, Lena acknowledged that she had become harsher and more critical of others. For example, she believes that there is only one way to succeed in the US and she has a tendency to tell people how they should follow this path. Lena also described with intensity her critical attitude toward her brother who did not follow her path. She does not like her judgmental and critical attitude, yet she cannot stop herself. Lena stated that she trusts few people and continues to rely on herself. Her immigration experience taught her that she is responsible for everything she does.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Immediately upon arrival in the US, Lena felt that she could finally live in a place where being different was accepted. The longer she lived here, the more she felt at home. Lena wanted to feel at home the same way she used to feel in Ukraine. Throughout the interviews, Lena spoke about wanting to be "one of them," to belong to this society. She wants to fit in, while remaining herself. When asked whether she identifies herself as Russian or American, Lena stated the she was born there but feels now that she is from here. She does not want to give up her Russian background and feels proud of it. She also noted that while she used to root for Russian athletes, over time she became more passionate about American athletes. While Lena stated that she belongs to American society, she has no American friends. She finds it difficult to connect with them on a deeper level. In response to a question about her attitudes towards Brighton Beach, Lena stated that she feels embarrassed about the behavior of Russian immigrants who live there. While she realizes that she is one of them, Lena spoke about "them" being the worst types of Jews because of their vulgar behavior.

Lena acknowledged that immigrating alone helped her to separate from her parents. She spoke about immigrating at an age when she was trying to figure out who she is. Although she was always an independent and strong person and those qualities helped her to survive, Lena believes that she was able to express her individuality only after coming to the US. As noted above, realizing that her father did not know everything was a major turning point for Lena. She believes that had her parents come with her or had she stayed with them, she would not have been as successful in separating from them.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Lena learned that she was Jewish when her classmates called her names and talked badly about Jews. After running home in tears, she listened to her mother talk about why she should be proud of being Jewish and that many people are ignorant and bigoted. At first, Lena tried to fit in and get along with other children. After a time, she still felt that she was not accepted by them. As she got older, she started defending herself by fighting. Lena would get in trouble at school or summer camps defending herself against anti-Semitism. Later on she realized that fighting did not change anything and she just wanted to leave the country.

Lena remembers her grandmother celebrating Jewish holidays, although nobody explained to her what they meant. She also remembered how something would click inside when she heard Jewish music, a feeling that it was hers. She also wanted to marry a Jew, not only because her parents encouraged her, but also because it was important for her. She wants to have a Jewish family and to be able to share the meaning of Jewishness with her partner. Lena feels strongly about the Jewish history of survival in the Holocaust. Being Jewish is about her roots, as well as about religion and faith in God. She feels proud of her background and believes that you can only be born Jewish. She resents those who convert to Judaism because they had not experienced anti-Semitism and other struggles of Jews. Lena also stated that Jewishness is her ethnicity. She noted that among Americans she feels most comfortable with Jews.

Currently Lena celebrates certain holidays and wants to provide a Jewish environment for her children. She attends a reformed synagogue a few times a year, lights candles on Shabbat, does not eat bread on Passover, and fasts on Yom Kippur. However,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Lena emphasized that she would not beat herself up for not following certain rituals. She pointed to her relationship with the rabbi's wife and her experiences in the yeshiva as important influences on her Jewish identity. However, Lena was clear about her feelings of resentment and rebelliousness against the "brainwashing" that she believed transpired at the yeshiva.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF LENA: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: I want to fit in but maintain my individuality.

> (What does it mean to be an immigrant and why is it uncomfortable?) Yes, yes it is *uncomfortable* because ... I don't know. I always wanted to *fit in* and maybe it started when I was little and did not want to be a Jew, wanted to be like everybody else. And I always had this desire, not to be like everybody else, but *fit in*. And that was expressed in how I was deciding whether to go to college or like all other Russians to go to computer courses. I did not, I did not go to computer courses. I realized that I could have finished them in 9 months and could make three times as much as I make now, but I did not do that because *it wasn't the right way*. I mean all Russians were doing it and I did not want to do that. Because they all were going, they were like faceless crowd who... And I never wanted to do what everybody else does. But on the other hand, I do what everybody else is doing: I am going to college, etc, but everybody here, not there. Everybody in this society. I accept this society more than, American society I accept, what they do, more than I accept what Russian immigrants do. Maybe because I want to *fit in*. I want to feel myself at *home*. And I want to be *one of them*. And that's why there is something about that feeling, when I feel like an immigrant, I have some kind of *negativity* connected to it. Because, I think, that if I feel myself as an immigrant here, then I will always be not at home. I will always feel that I immigrated from the Soviet Union and I will always be here as a guest. Yes. [ ] I want to feel myself here the way I used to feel over there. To be *comfortable* and be with friends. And know this life, how people interact with each other. (p. 38-39)

> I think that I want to remain my own, I want to remain an *individual*, yes, an *individual within society*. I mean I don't want to be an *individual* separated from all people. An *individual* on my own. I want to remain *my own person*. But at the same time, I need people around me. To communicate with someone. And maybe... Maybe I need to share my *personality* with someone, I guess. *I want to share with somebody*. I mean if I have some thoughts, or or I think about something, I can't think about it on my own. I want to *share* it with someone. So, maybe that's how these two desires - on one hand to remain my own person, on the other hand to be a *part of some bigger group*, maybe. They coexist in me. (p. 40)

These words speak for themselves. Throughout the interview Lena commented on her wish to be her "own person," while also wanting to belong and "fit in." She believes that this wish is related to her experiences as a Jew in the former USSR. I think that there are several aspects of her desire to fit in. Lena wants to fit into the mainstream of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

American society and not to feel like an immigrant. This clearly reflects her desire to feel comfortable, to feel "at home," which was, without a doubt, affected by her experience of uprootedness. She also wants to have a community and connection, she does not want to be separate and different. According to Erikson, group identity, or a person's feeling of belonging to the collective sense of identity, provides us with a sense of rootedness. This is very different from Natasha's desire to "blend in" and not to stand out. The difference seems to be in the sense of connection Lena has and wants. Yet, Lena is aware that she also wants to be an individual, someone with her own views, desires, and beliefs. This wish may in part be connected to her experience in the former Soviet Union where individuality was discouraged for the sake of collectivism, or common good. However, it is also clear that Lena is an independent person who successfully, though not without a struggle, negotiated her adolescent identity crisis.

### My immigration journey: from there to here

Theme 2: It was an enormous change. I felt very lonely and needed someone to be close to me.

Similar to the other two women described, Lena initiated her emigration. She made a conscious decision based on years of wishing to travel, her hatred of anti-Semitism, and changes in the social climate in Ukraine. Like Regina, Lena had a backup plan to go back if she did not like it in the US. This potential safety net was essential for their adjustment. However, unlike Regina, who was seven years older and more mature, Lena came to the US as an older adolescent. As she stated, she was still trying to figure out who she was. It was a very dramatic change in her life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> (When you think of immigration, what comes to mind?) What is the first thing that comes to mind? I think that it is *change*. Everything that's related to changes. Of course I remember... I probably had the most *unusual* immigration because I came alone, without my parents. And I was very young, I was eighteen. I mean my life changed completely. Maybe even more than... not more than for somebody else, but for me *personally*, it was very difficult. Maybe because I was alone. (p. 6)

As we can see, Lena does not describe her experience as trauma. She commented during the interview that every day at that time was a challenge. Loneliness was the most difficult aspect of Lena's initial period of adjustment. As described above, she was the kind of person who needed connection and community. She longed for connection to a person, an idea, an object.

> There were so many problems here. And I had to solve them somehow. And maybe because I was alone, I didn't have anyone to talk to but I had to talk to someone. And I didn't admit to myself WHO I was talking to. But I think that I was talking to God. And in THAT sense I became a *DEEPLY religious person*. (p. 23)

> I was a little *depressed*, maybe, *all the time* because I didn't have anyone to talk to. And that's why, when after the yeshiva, when I worked, I generally had time *to do other things* - I didn't do anything. I just wasn't in the mood for it. I didn't have anyone to do it with. Alone? I don't like to be alone. I always need to be with people. (p. 17)

Similar to Regina, Lena is aware of her feelings, of her depression. At first, she found strength in connecting to other Russian students in the yeshiva. Then it was her faith and "conversations" with God. She regularly spoke with her parents. However, that was not enough. When she became pregnant, Lena did not go back to Ukraine because of her fear of disappointing her parents. Their support came with the price of criticism and disappointment. What Lena wanted most of all was an intimate partner.

> At some point, I think, I really wanted to get married [laughs]. (Why do you think?) Not that I wanted to get married, I wanted to have a person close to me - simply a really close friend. A person I could share my problems with. And who

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

would have *supported* me when I struggled. (p.18)

> (How would you divide these eight and a half years?) Before and after my marriage. Because it was such a turning point. Not the fact that I got married. But simply because my life changed so much and I changed. [ ] I became a normal person, like I was before. I lost that harshness, maybe, towards people. [ ] I finally had *stable* friends, a group to hang out with. I now had a family - his parents became my parents because mine were not here. And I began feeling like ALL Russian immigrants. Meaning, with a family, with a place, with a home, you know? (p. 29-30)

Getting married not only provided Lena with a husband. It re-established her life: family, home, friends. Only then did she begin feeling more settled and stable.

> In general, my life became much calmer. I mean established. I am married, and I am married already for four and a half years. I mean I have some stability. I mean, *overall*, you could say that my life if stable. I mean after all all these years that I am here. And *finally*, it is already stable. I mean I feel that I am *in peace with myself*, if you could say that. (p. 1)

As I am beginning to see, the theme of relationships and need for connection is common for many participants. For those who came alone without a family this need is essential. It is also important to note that the connection does not have to be with a person. I believe that Lena's faith provided her with an internal object until she found her husband.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

Theme 3: It is important for me to feel at home here. I want to be one of them.

> At the moment I arrived, I don't know why, I really liked it here. I immediately felt that *I can be, I can be home*. And that's why, probably, during the very first months I decided that I am not going back. (p. 12) (What made you feel that way?) Because first of all, I saw how many immigrants there were here. Not only Russian, but all. And how people were... how do you say it, *melting pot* - New York. And I saw that so many people can live together and *not fight*. And, how can I explain this? In spite of the fact that they live together, they still... That there are *different religions* and every person, *although you live with somebody else in the community you can pursue your own religion* or *your own... whatever it* is. And I saw that and that's why I felt *comfortable*. I felt that I could also

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> adjust here. And even if I have my own, *different* views on life, I could still be *together with other people*. And this *harmony* that I saw, I guess that's why I felt myself at home. (p. 14)

One of the main reasons for Lena's decision to emigrate was anti-Semitism in Ukraine. She desperately wanted to live in the society where her difference, being a Jew, would be accepted. As Lena found that kind of society here, she immediately felt "at home." It is worth noting that probably only in New York can one experience such diversity and relative "harmony."

> I accept this society more than, American society I accept, what they do, more than I accept what Russian immigrants do. Maybe because I want to *fit in*. I want to feel myself at *home*. And I want to be *one of them*. And that's why there is something about that feeling, when I feel like an immigrant, I have some kind of *negativity* connected to it. Because, I think, that if I feel myself as an immigrant here, then I will always be not at home. I will always feel that I immigrated from the Soviet Union and I will always be here as a guest. Yes. [ ] I want to feel myself here the way I used to feel over there. To be *comfortable* and be with friends. And know this life, how people interact with each other. (p. 39)

I think that the metaphor of "home" speaks to the internal experience of comfort and peace. Home represents one's native land, sense of rootedness, intimacy, and belonging. It is interesting that Lena uses the English word "home" frequently. It may support the notion that she feels "at home" even linguistically.

Lena's wish to be "one of them" relates to Akhtar's (1999) notion of social affiliation. According to Akhtar, an immigrant moves from the sense of "yours" or "mine" to the feeling of "we" and "ours." On one hand, Lena wants to belong to American society, feels at home in the US, and speaks English fluently. On the other hand, she has no American friends and feels some discomfort among them. Yet, she is also uncomfortable among Russians in Brighton Beach. It is possible that Akhtar's dimension of social affiliation is not monolithic. Rather than placing an immigrant at a single point on

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

this linear dimension, I believe that Birman's (1994) notion of different acculturation styles may provide a better framework. She distinguishes between behavioral and identity cultural orientations. One of the styles is "blended biculturalism." Immigrants who use this style are highly identified with both cultures and participate behaviorally in both. Such immigrants have a feeling of belonging to a community of other blended biculturals. There is a sense that Lena feels most comfortable among other Russian immigrants who speak fluent English and Russian, who are educated in this country, and who feel comfortable in the US. The notions of Kleinian paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions as they relate to an immigrant's relationships to American and Russian cultures are also applicable here. Generally, Lena functions in the world from the depressive position of ambivalence. In terms of her relationship to American and Russian cultures, she oscillates between her need to use splitting, i.e. paranoid-schizoid position, and feeling ambivalent about Brighton Beach, i.e. depressive position.

> *I never say I'm from Russia.* I say *"I was born in Russia." I don't know why.* Because *I am not from Russia. I can't say it now*. I could have said it five years ago or seven years ago. Now *I don't feel like I am from Russia. I feel like I was born there.* And maybe it is because *I brought a lot of stuff from there. A lot of my inside*, so to say, *is from there. But I don't feel like I am from there.* [ ] Maybe it's just time passed. And with time I feel that *I am from here, not from there*. That *I am more from here*, maybe. Because I guess almost half of my life I live here. Maybe a little less. And I feel that *I am more from here.* Because *my core values came from there*, but *a lot of my personality* formed here. Because I came at such age, seventeen, when you are trying to understand *who you are and what you want from life*. And all that happened here. That's why *I feel like I am from here.* Because what I want in the future - it is because I am here. (p. 46-47)

Lena's continuous insistence that there is a difference between saying "I am from Russia" and "I was born in Russia" speaks to the importance of an immigrant's inner sense of where they are in the acculturation, or adjustment, process. Lena described a gradual

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

process of learning the language and the culture before feeling completely comfortable to saying that she was "from here."

Theme 4: The immigration experience had both a positive and negative impact on me as a person.

> I think that everything that changed in me, it changed because I am not there, but here. Because I came here and experienced immigration. (What would you have been like there?) I would have been very dependent on other people. Had I gotten married there, I would have been dependent on my husband. [ ] And *another thing* I noticed is that none of them [her friends in Ukraine] have their own opinion. Everything they say, they either say "we" or "he," meaning husband. So they completely depend morally and financially on another person. And I would have been the same. And I was like that. Before I came here, I was dependent on my parents. All children probably depend to some extent on their parents. But I would not have had... I would have known who I AM. I mean, I would not have had this *individuality* that I have now. (p. 24)

> I think that probably I am a little... somewhere deep I am proud of myself. That I came here and I was alone, and that I made my way, so to speak, into the world. [smiles] (p. 25)

Lena's positive experiences of the impact of her immigration experience include her sense of independence and individuality, her sense of success and achievement, and her sense of agency.

> To some extent I, perhaps, became harsher. To myself and to others. I don't know if it's good or bad. I was always a soft person, and a very kind person. I was always ready to do anything people would ask me. And that changed here. (What do you mean "harsher"?) Harsher... I don't forgive, for example, a betrayal from friends. [ ] I don't feel sorry for myself. If things are hard for me, I tell myself that I have to do this. *No matter what it is.* [ ] I just do not feel sorry for myself. If I am struggling - it's fine. Everyone is struggling. I mean I tell myself that I am not alone. And that there should be struggle. That life should not be easy. (p. 23)

> When I *disapprove* of something, *I let people know*. And it happens all the time. My friends always complain about me. And my husband complains that I constantly criticize everyone. And I believe that I know *the right way*. And if people *don't go that way, I let them know. Constantly* [smiles]. Yes. And I think this has to change. (p. 25)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

However, the positive impact came at a price. It seems that Lena speaks about creating a hard shell that protected her from pain. While her marriage helped her become somewhat softer, Lena's judgmental and critical attitude persists and bothers her. As Lena bitterly complained about her difficulty in dealing with her brother, I kept wondering whether she split off and projected a part of herself onto him. Her brother seems to be a vulnerable loser who is dependent and needs constant support. Lena cannot allow herself to be vulnerable or weak. Her experience taught her that such qualities bring pain and suffering. Considering the above quotes and Lena's comment that she does not get excited by things, I also wonder whether she is still somewhat depressed.

> Like *my boyfriends* who *treated me like, you know, like a thing. You know.* When you, when you are used for only one purpose. And *nobody cares what kind of person you are. As long as you do what they wanted to do, what they want you to do.* I knew that interpersonal relationships are different here. And at some point... And maybe at some point I started responding this way. It was like a *self-defense*, I guess. I mean I didn't want to... *I could not be vulnerable anymore*. (p. 19)

> *I don't really trust people*. I mean *I can trust them [my friends] with something that is not very serious*. But something very personal or important for me... Maybe it started in the very beginning, when I had several incidents, like with my girlfriend who betrayed me, with people who were with me when they needed me and then left when I was no longer useful to them. (p. 28)

This is an interesting comment. According to sociologists (Kliger, 2000, personal communication), surveys show that Russians tend to trust their friends more than family or spouses. However, my own personal experiences and conversations with my friends tell me that immigration experiences may have changed that. Lena's sense that she trusts her husband more than anyone else may not be uncommon. I am not sure why it happens. It is also not clear whether it varies according to the length of time friendship exists and the quality of marital relationship.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Theme 5: Immigrating alone helped me to separate and individuate from my parents.

> And one thing that was a sort of a turning point for me. When I came here, after several months here, I don't remember what the problem was or what question I had, I didn't have anyone to ask. I didn't have anyone here. I called my parents at home and asked my dad what to do. And he said to me, "I don't know." And that was the first time in my life that he told me "I don't know." And that was a shock for me. I then realized that *I am all by myself.* That I could only rely on myself. And that when I think of immigration, I probably always remember what he said to me. It was an unforgettable moment. And *from that moment on*, I always, I realized that if I don't answer my own questions, nobody will give me answers. (p. 6-7)

> I think that I became... I just began... How do I say it... I just began to realize that everything I do - I am responsible for. [ ] I think it was that moment when I realized that everything I do, if I make a mistake, I have to pay for it. And nobody will help me. There won't be parents who will protect me from all the problems. (p. 20)

Blos (1967) described adolescence as the "second individuation" period. "The disengagement from internalized objects - love and hate objects - opens the way in adolescence to the finding of external and extrafamilial love and hate objects" (Blos, 1967, p. 163). It is striking how Lena describes the turning point of realizing that her father does not know everything. According to Blos, individuation implies that an adolescent takes increasing responsibility for what he or she does or what he or she is, rather than blaming or praising one's parents for it. Although it is clear that Lena had begun the process of individuating from her parents long before her emigration, the immigration process pushed this movement forward. However, this did not arise merely out of the physical distance from her parents. Lena's internal fantasy of her parents as all-powerful and all-knowing was shattered. It appears to have been a somewhat traumatic or startling experience for her that left her wondering whether anyone would ever be there for her.

> (Usually, when people who are independent or rebels, when they mature, they experience some difficulty when *separating from their parents*. How do you think

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> immigrating during that time affected you? *Maybe it made it easier to separate from the parents or more difficult?)* Yes, I think that yes. *I think that it made it easier*. Because of *the fact that I was a rebel*, you always had... *It was coming from the fact that I always had my own views of things*. And that's why it *definitely* helped. [ ] I always had very *strong, you know, inner... I don't know what strength, some kind of strength*. And my, *I guess, rebellious, my rebellious character was coming from that.* [ ] I think it helped me in immigration. And it helped when I was leaving from there. [ ] (How would have this process happened if you didn't immigrate?) I think it would have been more *unsuccessful*. Because, first of all, had I stayed, *my rebel*, it would have... I mean here it sort of *transformed into something else, into something better*, maybe. Over there, it would have always remained in the same shape. I mean, I wouldn't have been able to do anything with myself. I mean I *rebelled* that *society* and what transpired there. I would have had this anger, possibly, or some sense of hopelessness. It would not have changed into anything else. And if I came here with my parents, I would have probably still *separated* from them. But it probably would have been a *different process*. And maybe it would have been more *difficult*, because if we had come here together, my parents would have *expected me to be with them. And to be hundred percent supportive of them. And I would not be able to.* So, maybe it's much better that we came at different times. (p. 41-42)

Similar to my own experience, physical distance from parents and the struggles of the immigration process provided a kind of transitional space for Lena to negotiate the individuation process. However, it clearly required considerable inner resources and support from others. It also left a scar of distrust and depression. It is interesting that while Lena believes that she always had her "own views of things," she imagines herself deferring to her husband had she stayed in her native country. At this point in her life, she is not aware of this inconsistency in her beliefs about herself. This may speak to the fact that Lena is still consolidating her identity.

## Jewishness: then and now

Theme 6: My negative experiences with anti-Semitism affected my wish to fit in.

> I was probably in the first or second grade. And I think someone said, or maybe pointed at me and said that she is a Jew. Or something like that. I remember I

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> came home, I ran home in tears. And I was crying hard and told my mom that it wasn't true that I was a Jew. Because everyone says that Jews are bad. That they are, I don't know, they are not like everyone else, not like us. And I could not believe that I was also a Jew. But my parents, my mom, she told that yes, I am a Jew. And that I should be proud of it. And that I should absolutely not be *ashamed of it*. And that *there is a lot of history behind it*. And that *it's a great*, so to say, *nation*. [ ] But I was at that age that I didn't understand all that. And *there was* and *there was just one thought* that *I was not accepted*. That I was not like everyone else. And I was always outside. And I always tried to make sure that I was *one of them*. I mean I sort of *denied* that I was a Jew. And I tried to be friends with non Jews, with all other *kids in the class*. But it didn't help, because they all knew about it. (p. 9)

Lena's first awareness of being Jewish arises out of negative and prejudiced experiences with peers. It is possible to apply the stage theories of racial or ethnic identity development, such as Cross' or Helms' (Helms, 1990), to Lena's description. After she realizes her "otherness" Lena wants to hide it. Considering the developmental tasks of latency age as focused on peer relations and the sense of competency, Lena desperately wants to be accepted. As her denial of her Jewishness did not help her to be accepted, Lena began fighting, i.e. expressing generalized anger at the majority group during the stage of Immersion (Cross, 1978). Later she was able to come to terms, i.e. internalize, a positive personally relevant Jewish identity.

> I always wanted to *fit in* and maybe it started when I was little and did not want to be a Jew, wanted to be like everybody else. And I always had this desire, not to be like everybody else, but *fit in*. (p. 38)

It is clear that "fitting in" or being accepted is very important for Lena. Her sense of otherness and the negative experiences associated with it during her childhood made this desire conscious. It was reactivated when Lena immigrated and once again felt "different." However, her wish to fit in does not come at the price of losing her individuality. Both are essential for her.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Of course, he [rabbi] had different thoughts in his head. They wanted to *convert everyone into Judaism*. And he wanted, as we joked in this yeshiva, "everyone will go there in jeans and leave in wigs." [ ] It was his goal, that's why he came to my city. He just wanted *to convert people to be real Jews*. [ ] And so I studied there [in yeshiva] for a year, with difficulties. And after a year... I realized that they *brainwashed* me the same way I was *brainwashed* in the Soviet Union. Just *brainwashed* for a different reason. In the Soviet Union I had to become a communist. Here I had to become religious. And I really *rebelled*. (pp. 11-12)

This theme of mutual disappointment between Russian and American Jews is not uncommon. In spite of her genuine interest in Judaism, Lena resented having to pretend and comply with the notions of Jewishness imposed on her by others. Once again, she wants to be true to herself.

Theme 7: Jewishness is a big part of who I am.

> If I am asked about *ethnicity*, I say that I am *Jewish*. And it makes me feel good that I can say that. That I am not afraid, I don't look over my shoulder and who is listening to me and who would hear it. *I am very proud of it*. And that, of course, *coming from here, not from there*. [ ] (What does it mean for you to be Jewish?) *I guess I finally know who I am*. And maybe when I think about what kind of person I am, I think of myself as a *strong person*, I think that it is *coming from me being Jewish*. Because, *you know, this whole nation* - that it *survived*. *From beginning of time* they tried to put them down and they kept getting up. [ ] Some of it is *coming from there*. *From my roots and from, you know, from where I came from*. What else? I don't know, perhaps, maybe there is some *sadness* when I think about being *Jewish*. For the same reasons. When I think about Holocaust, when I think what was happening to Jews. [ ] But probably *more than anything is pride*. That *I am very proud to be Jewish*. (p. 47-48)

The fact that Lena begins her answer with a comment on "not" being worried about prejudice and discrimination only confirms how significant those experiences had been in her life. She associates her Jewishness to the positive historical context of survival and pride. I could imagine that Lena heard these themes from her parents and grandparents. As she noted in the interview, Lena had positive experiences of Jewishness in her family: celebrating holidays, hearing Yiddish, and listening to "her" music. Only

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

later on Lena learned about faith and religion which became an integral part of her sense of Jewishness.

> *I strongly believe that you have to be born one* [Jew]. [ ] (So if only one parent was a Jew, it would not have affected them the same way as if both parents were Jewish?) Right. Because... One of the reasons, if you were half over there, meaning if only one parent was Jewish and the other wasn't, those children were always non-Jews in the passports. And *obviously, it meant the whole different, you know, it was the whole different world game.* And I think that for me, *part of being Jewish is a big part of it was surviving that society. And the big part of it* was to remain, *you know*, to remain *my own person*, in spite of what kind of influences there were. That's why. And even if they were brought up as Jews, which I doubt, for the *society* they were not Jews. They were Russian, or Ukrainian, or *whatever it is. And that's a very different experience*. (p. 55)

Once again, in contrast to a commonly heard belief in the US that being Jewish refers to religion or cultural background, Lena's words reflect the concepts of race and genetics. However, she also connects them to interpersonal and social interactions. The theme of surviving prejudice and discrimination in the above quote reflects Ostow's (1977) notion that the myths of crisis, surviving attack, and triumphing over enemies give the individual a sense of potency and optimism.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Olga**
**"I long for stability and permanence in relationships."**

*Olga is an attractive, thin young woman with dark features and high cheek bones. She was dressed in bright-colored fashionable clothes and had her own style. Olga was friendly and cooperative as she spoke about her experiences. While she appeared somewhat concerned about my knowing some people she described during the first session, she relaxed during the second one. She had no difficulty expressing her feelings or sharing her thoughts. Olga enjoyed telling stories about her life with a sense of humor and eloquence. She spoke Russian and only occasionally used English words. On my request, Olga shared several of her poems with me. She was curious about my opinion. While she was hesitant to talk about her marital relationship during the interview, Olga shared her struggles with me afterwards.*

Olga is a 28 year-old married woman who lives with her husband in an upper middle class town in a New York county. She has been married for four years to a Russian immigrant who works in the technology field and they are starting to think about having children. They are also considering buying a house in the same area because of its safety and good schools. Olga works as a privacy quality administrator for a bank. She is thinking of going back to graduate school to receive her MBA. When asked to describe her current job, Olga spoke at length about her path to this career. Prior to this job, she worked in the non-profit field for five years and greatly enjoyed it. She graduated from college majoring in psychology. During college, Olga worked for an International exchange program and tutored children. Then she worked for NYANA in their Homebound Program for Russian-speaking elderly. When the grants for this program ended, Olga decided to change the field. During her work in the non-profit field she also

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

volunteered for several years for a Russian-speaking private psychotherapist who convinced her not to pursue psychology. Olga was told that she would either make money and be dissatisfied with her work or enjoy it and not make any money. Her husband also insisted that she finds a better paid position with a possibility of the company paying for her MBA. While she at first resented having to change fields, at this point Olga reported feeling satisfied with her job and her movement within the company.

Olga loves to read and write, enjoys "role-play" computer games, painting, and listening to music. She described with humor her habit of carrying and reading a book "at all times." Olga stated that she can get "withdrawal" symptoms if there is a time lapse between books. At this point, she reads and writes in Russian and English without much difference. However, Olga believes that she is beginning to lose her fluency in Russian. In addition to short stories and other fiction, she wrote poetry in the past. She described herself as someone who does not like adventure or excitement in contrast to her husband. Olga's parents are divorced and also live in New York. She spoke about her closeness to her mother and expressed her resentment of her father.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Olga immigrated to New York as a refugee at age 18 with her family from a large Ukrainian city 11 years ago. The moving force behind the decision making and the immigration process itself was her mother. She wanted a better future for Olga because of the anti-Semitism and discrimination in the former USSR. While she wanted the family to immigrate at the end of 70s, Olga's father was against it and interfered with his wife's efforts. By the end of 80s many of their friends and relatives were immigrating. They

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

were able to interact with several of them during their visits to Ukraine. While her parents, mostly her mother, worked on the process of applying and getting ready, Olga was kept in the dark. She was told not to tell anyone about their plans because of fears of crime. Olga described her father as generally paranoid about everything, critical, intrusive, passive, and overbearing. As the day of leaving approached, her parents' marital arguments and discord increased. During one fight, Olga became so upset that she slapped her father's face trying to protect her mother. Until three days before their departure, Olga went to school and told about their plans only her best friend.

Olga remembered well the day of their departure and saying good bye to her friend. She was excited and thought of immigration as an adventure. Olga did not believe that she was leaving for good and was hopeful about coming back or bringing her friend to the US. She only regretted leaving her apartment and other things, such as books, her drawings, and her stories. However, Olga also wrote a poem for her friend which appeared to express some sadness and anger about immigrating. The family left using an experimental bus program which took them through Czechoslovakia to Austria for two and a half weeks and then to Italy for several months before flying to New York. While Olga was in Austria, she met another young Russian woman who became her best friend. Olga spoke about two of them being together "in the sea of the unknown." When leaving Austria and her friend, Olga described her devastation about having to say good bye all over again. They lost touch until several months after her arrival to New York where they found each other by pure chance.

Olga described the family's Italian experience as a nightmare. Considering the fact that her parents never got along prior to immigration, living in a stressful environment of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dislocation with grandparents in a small apartment cause more tension. Everyone fought and argued and at times the tensions almost led to physical altercations. They also had to stay longer after one of the grandparents had heart problems. Olga has no memory of the flight from Italy to the US. She had no explanation for this fact except for speculating that she was too stressed out to remember. After arriving to New York, the family lived in a slimy hotel in midtown Manhattan for two months before finding permanent apartments. Olga described these two months as a dream: vague and distanced.

The family settled in two apartments, with paternal grandparents and maternal grandmother living in the same apartment. They continued to have problems, including increasing marital discord between Olga's parents. While her mother was trying to survive and provide for the family, her father interfered, argued, and yelled. Finally, within a few months, they decided to separate. Olga said that her father took everything from their apartment and moved to California with his parents. He did not support her in any way and only complained about her not keeping in touch. He later remarried and moved back to New York area. After arrival to the US, Olga went to high school for several months to improve her English, while waiting for her high school diploma to be sent from Ukraine. She then went to college to study psychology. Olga stated that her mother and grandmother supported her so she did not have to work to make money.

Olga spoke about her college experience as playing a major role in her adjustment process. She learned a lot about American society and educational system. She experienced the freedom of choosing classes, as well as the freedom to speak about anything. Olga finally found other Russian immigrants with similar interests that she could talk to. However, she acknowledged her disappointment after realizing that other Russian

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigrants came from different backgrounds and that finding friends was not as easy as she anticipated. Nevertheless, Olga felt connected and free. Approximately at the same time she met her husband-to-be and immediately fell in love. She remembered meeting him at her best friend's birthday party and dropping a plate with stuffed eggs when seeing her future husband for the first time.

Olga's relationship with her husband has not been all smooth. After dating for two years they became engaged, only to break up a year later. The break up was initiated by her husband who felt that he did not enjoy his freedom enough. He wanted to take some time off from their relationship. Olga was devastated by this event. She was depressed, cried a lot, and could barely function. Then she started dating furiously. After four months Olga decided to give him back the engagement ring as a final separation symbol. After realizing the possibility of losing her, her husband changed his mind and they moved in together. They married about a year and a half later. Olga spoke about wanting to get married to have stability and commitment. After she graduated from college, her psychology mentor offered her a two year research position with him in Paris. In spite of her strong desire to go, Olga declined this offer because she wanted to get married and did not believe that her husband would wait for her.

In general, Olga spoke a number of times about the importance of stability and stable relationships in her life. She strongly values her family relationships and friendships. Olga defines a close friend as a relative. Her relationship with her best girlfriend has had some ebbs and flows over the years. As her girlfriend engaged in wild experimentation with freedom and identity, Olga remained her one stable friend. Several times her girlfriend stopped all contact and then came back. After one of these incidents Olga gave

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her an ultimatum: if you leave me one more time, I may not be there when you come back. Olga described their relationship recently as more mature and stable.

Olga reported that it was during college that she first began understanding and speaking English. This allowed her to interact with professors and other, non-Russian, students. She gradually began to understand jokes and humor and be able to be funny in English. At one moment she realized that she could curse and argue in English. When interacting with Americans, Olga reported being scared of them at first. She felt that they were different, they were strangers. However, as her English improved and she interacted with more Americans, Olga became more comfortable. She spoke at length about her positive experience with her boss at the International exchange program. She was suspicious at first, wondering why this older guy was so nice to her. However, Olga eventually became close with him and his family. This experience taught her that Americans were not as strange as she thought.

Olga emphasized that the process of saying good bye to her best friend in Ukraine and letting go of things was gradual. She spoke about writing many letters over the years as a way to say good bye slowly. Only now she realizes that it was a difficult journey in her life. Olga has not been back to Ukraine. While she wants to go to see her city, school, and other places, she is afraid to go alone. Her husband went back to visit but refused to take her and now refuses to go with her. Olga realizes that everyone has changed, including herself, and that it would be difficult to find common language with people she knew.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

When talking about the impact of immigration experience on her life, Olga identified self-discovery as the major theme. She felt that only in the US she became the person she imagined herself to be in her stories. While everything was defined and settled in Ukraine, she could try new things and be herself in America. Olga found herself enjoying dancing and Goth music, wearing outrageous black outfits with silver jewelry and having long hair, and the freedom to express her thoughts. In addition to the immigration itself, Olga believes that her parents' divorce was also instrumental in her self-discovery. Finally, she did not have her father telling her what to wear or where not to go. Meeting her husband and getting married opened more opportunities for Olga. She went to parties, began traveling, and recreated her library. Until they moved out from her mother's apartment, she used to accept the more conservative clothes her mother bought for her. Only after moving out did Olga give away all her clothes and began developing her own unique style. At that point she was still writing to her best friend in Ukraine and sending pictures. He wrote to her that he barely recognized her or, rather, that he recognized the person in her stories.

Olga also reflected on her growing up and maturing. She spoke about the loss of innocence and childhood after going through stressful and painful times. She compared immigrating to closing a chapter of her life. Olga commented that the nostalgic feelings she experiences at times are more about the loss of childhood and past, rather than actual people and things. While she regrets leaving behind her drawings and writing, Olga came to terms with this fact, stating that one should let go of one's childhood.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In terms of her life in the US as an immigrant, Olga feels quite comfortable. She is, however, worried about losing her Russian while not gaining the fluency and vocabulary in English she wished she had. Olga noticed that she now tends to think, dream, and write in English. As she reflected on the fact that she also tends to argue and curse in English, Olga agreed with me that it allows her distance. She also acknowledged that she tends to express stronger and more negative emotions through poetry.

While her best friends are other Russian-speaking immigrants, Olga has many American friends and acquaintances. She stated that she could not imagine being married to one because of fundamental cultural and linguistic differences. When asked to describe different types of Russian immigrants, Olga identified four types. The first type are people who live in the "Russian bubble" without wanting to or trying to be a part of American life. The second type are Russian immigrants who became extremely religious. The third are people like her, who are trying to balance American and Russian cultures in their lives. The fourth and last type are immigrants who become completely Americanized. They find it less difficult and complicated to get rid of all Russian parts. Olga believes that this typology depends on each person's character.

Olga identifies herself as a "Russian speaking Jew" and would only identify herself as an American if she was in trouble. When in Europe, she enjoys telling people that she is a Russian, while using the privileges of her American money and other advantages. Nevertheless, she spoke about her sense of loyalty to America and pride about coming here and accomplishing a lot. Olga stated that speaking two languages and knowing two cultures is a great benefit. However, she finds it difficult at times to explain to Americans who she is because they become confused about geography, ethnicity, and religious

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

aspects of her identity. Olga described with humor how she enjoys visiting Brighton Beach as a place to see "Russia-town" with its "cream of society" and colorful personalities. In the past she was shocked by the separateness of Brighton Beach life from the rest of American society. Olga remembers her horror at seeing a sign in a grocery store window that said, "We speak English."

### Jewishness: then and now

Olga clearly identifies herself as a Jew. However, while living in the former Soviet Union, her nationality was recorded as a Cherkess[19] because of her mother's partial background. She reported that her school was dominated by Jewish students and teachers. Many of the students who were not officially identified as Jews, were half-Jews. At that time being Jewish only meant her nationality. Olga grew up with the sense of fear and paranoia shared with her by her father. They were afraid of persecution, discrimination, and crime. She was not allowed to tell anyone she was a Jew or talk with anyone about Jewish topics. Her parents and their friends also avoided explicit conversations because of their fear that "even the walls could hear." There was a sense that people identified each other just by looking and sharing unspoken wisdom. Olga stated several times during the interview that she knew who she was. Her family told her that Jews were different from others, although not less than. Olga's father spoke on many occasions about being better than others. She commented to me that only later on she realized that this superiority had more to do with her father's narcissism than national

[19] Cherkess region is located in the Caucasus mountains. People from that area are known for their dark features.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pride.

Upon arrival to the US, and even prior to that in Austria and Italy, Olga described the intense level of confusion. At first, everyone tried to pretend to be religious because of the fear of deportation. Olga believed that the older generation was finally free to be observant, while her parents' generation had no knowledge about it and were only fearful. As to her own experience, Olga spoke about her resentment at being labeled as a "Jew" which in the US meant being religious. She found it difficult to explain that discrimination and persecution in the former USSR were not about religion or that the major reason for their immigration was not only the actual anti-Semitism, but rather the fear itself. Eventually Olga understood more about American culture and adjusted to the questions. She also felt free to be herself and express her Jewishness in her own way.

Olga believes that only in the US she really learned about Judaism and Jewish history. For her, being Jewish means having roots, belonging to a group of people who survived Holocaust and who have their own culture. However, most of all, being Jewish is about family, rituals and traditions to pass on for generations. Olga feels proud to belong to and be connected to Jewish community. She could never imagine marrying a non-Jew because it could bring family problems and struggles with identity for her children. As she looks into the future, she wants to have a close knit family who would stay connected no matter where they are.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF OLGA: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: I know who I am, but I tend to be dominated by others and often do not actualize my abilities and dreams.

Throughout the interviews with Olga, the theme of her lack of self-actualization and tendency to follow paths lead by others was salient. However, it is important to note that this theme is in no way conscious on her part. In spite of her rational explanations of certain choices she made, I had a strong sense of her regret and subtle resentment. I also found myself feeling frustrated that she does not take a stronger stance, while at the same time feeling protective of her. This countertransference reaction is twofold. On one hand, my frustration is related more to my own personality and tendency to take charge and be active. On the other hand, Olga's presentation and demeanor pulled for my maternal side. I am not surprised that many people in her life take a parental role with her. The clearest examples of this dynamic are her tendency to go along with her husband's views of what she should do, her rejection of the opportunity to work in Paris, her decision not to pursue psychology, and her career switch from the non-profit to corporate world.

> He [her professor] was going to work in Paris for two years. [ ] And he offered me to go there to work. But I was already looking at marriage with big eyes... I cried. Said that two years in Paris is good (smiles), here, but my husband will probably not wait. Here. But my education, really, ended there. Because after that I started working. We thought that money is needed, you know. To study right away - it's spending again. Grants, they have them or not, you know, will pay or not pay. [ ] I still could not figure out what I want. Thought that if it is a Master's program, you should do something you are sure of. At first, I was still hoping for *social work*, but then I realized that I won't do that. Here. My husband insisted on something related to computers, like *web-design* or something like that. Because everyone was finding good jobs. But again, I was not sure that it is worth my time. But in the end I stopped. Looks like I'll have to do MBA. Because, I think, in the end it is something, you know, that you could use a lot. (p. 15)

> [Olga describes how her psychotherapy mentor convinced her not to pursue

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> psychology.] When I flew out of the non-profit world (smiles), when we lost our grants... I had another critical moment. My husband was always upset that I was not looking for a job. [ ] He thought that I am not looking, that I am not buying newspapers, that I am not doing anything, that there were plenty of jobs laying around. In reality it was a little bit different. I was simply devastated by realization that I could not go back there. Every time I would buy a newspaper, the first thing I looked at was *social work* somewhere in a *nursing home*, or some *nursing* program. I would call there and they would happily tell me that they really needed people and that they could only pay me like thirty two thousand. And I realized that to bring this offer to my husband with no, you know, no possibility of growth during several years... [ ] I knew that I could not go to him with that. (pp. 65-66)

Olga knows her abilities, her dreams, and her desires. She is insightful and has clear ideas about who she is. Yet she makes choices that more often than not reflect someone else's convictions. The way she talks about her decision to go for her MBA is not convincing. Since Olga did not reflect on this dynamic or its roots, I can only speculate about it. I believe that, having been criticized, judged, and dominated by her father, Olga feels insecure about her abilities and may be choosing people in her life who will both question her capacities and provide guidance. As with many couples, her relationship with her husband may provide an opportunity to resolve old parental conflicts.

> With men I... I had and still have a tendency to depend on what people tell me about how they feel about me. *Consistently* so, consistent, you know, because if after a period of time I am not told, I will question again if the *feelings* were still there. Because from my early childhood I knew I did not deserve it. You know, if the person who is suppo... who must love you according to their position, does not love you, you know, then the person who does not have to will [not]... you know. At any moment anything could happen, you know. Maybe I will not turn the right way, or sit the wrong way, you know, I won't be loved. (p. 79)

> You know, because you always have to have *fifty-fifty*, you know. I can never just know that I am LOVED, you know. And *there is no*, you know, *there is no possibilities*, that a person could have some *emotions*, that something could happen. A person could maybe. You know, it happens in life. (You mean there are not guarantees?) No guarantees, that's right. It always scared me. Because I have no guarantees - I have not had any guarantees from my childhood. And this is an *awful* thing for me. (p. 80)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

I believe that Olga may often follow others' direction to be "loved" and to avoid potential loss. At the same time, there is significant evidence that she has a strong, but subtle core. Olga continues to write and read, the two activities that allow for her self-expression. When she is pushed up against a wall, she fights back. While the incident in which she slapped her father was quite uncharacteristic of her, it indicates an ability to fight and stand up for herself. Throughout the narrative Olga provided several examples of such an ability, including giving her husband and best friend ultimatums. Another example of "sticking to her guns" involved her peer group. Having been invited by a relative and her girlfriend to join and hang out with a popular group of friends, Olga decided against it because she felt patronized and disrespected. Without question, this subtle inner strength helped Olga in the process of adjusting to the US.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Theme 2: Immigrating was like an adventure. Only in my poetry and later on did I realize the losses I experienced.

> I had a sense that I did not really understand, you know, did not feel the seriousness and importance of what was happening. I was very romantic, you know. Had no clue about what kind of logistic aspects of what we had to deal with. We thought: "We are going to America!" My parents of course understood. I thought, "Oh, cool, you know, everything is allowed (smiles). We could invite everyone here." I did not see what they had to do and to go through to get us here. (pp. 22-23)

> I had this sense. First of all, everything was... You see, well you are seventeen years-old. I had been friends with my best friend for two years. [ ] I did not think that I would never see him [again]. From my point of view it was like: well, of course, I will come back and take you with me. What kind of question is that, you know. [ ] And I had no thoughts about not coming back, or about some loss. The only thing that I was upset about - we lived in the same apartment for eleven years. This loss of the apartment, that was a little upsetting, you know, the place,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> you know, where you always lived. The books I lost. But in general, everything was perceived as an adventure, you know, as an interesting incident in one's life. (pp. 21-22)

Typical of many other immigrants, especially those who are younger, the sense of excitement and joy helped Olga to get through some difficult times. And while she was consciously thinking about her adventure, her poetry expressed her sense of loss.

> Listen, all this is a lie -
> Illusion of affluence and satisfaction.
> I don't want to fly to the other end of the ocean
> Though my life here is not so great.
> I will never agree to lose you,
> I am so lonely without you.
> Life learned to shoot us in the heart
> And kill us before our time.
> Why did everything turn out this way?
> Not only waves will separate us,
> Barriers of little people and papers,
> Borders like angry wolves.
> Who is to blame? Who's fault it is?
> Who gave them the right to decide our fate?
> But it is time, the bridge is up behind us, and
> There is no time to argue with destiny. (1989 - p. 52)

Theme 3: It was a gradual process of saying good bye and adjusting to the US.

Olga commented that she never said good bye to her best friend and that the real separation happened in their letters.

> Yes, in Austria, in Italy I began saying good byes. (What did that meant to you, beginning to say good bye?) Began... We began writing letters when I arrived. No, actually, I got my first letter in Austria. I mean I wrote one and got my reply in Italy when we just got there. [ ] It was too expensive to talk and we talked through letters. We wrote a lot. The letters are laying in boxes by kilograms. And for me it meant the loss. (p. 53)

In addition to letters, Olga's devastation when leaving her newly acquired friend in Austria allowed for the expression of her sadness about everything else she had lost.

> Practically, you are writing a letter, or you talk on the phone. And you are getting

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> further away every time. A little less, a little more *personal*, a little-little-little-little, so it's not painful for the person. And in the end you call each other and say, "Hi! How cool! You know, everything is fine here, blah blah blah. Send letters from your birthday, whatever, pictures, etc." You know, it's like you are saving yourself somehow. *Defense mechanism* is working like, you know, on every step, it is well greased (laughing) with, you know what, oil. (p. 86)

Olga made a comparison to a short story she once read and was affected by. This story consists of six letters from a woman to her lover, whom she could not be with. They were spread over a fifteen-year period and each letter appears to speak to the process of adjusting to her loss and separation and her attempts to convince him that everything is fine. However, the last letter consists of her admission that she wrote all six letters the day he left and that she would now commit suicide knowing that by the time he gets this news he would have an established and secure life and would not be hurt as badly. Olga spoke about crying for a day after she read this story. Her comparison speaks to the similarities, often mentioned in literature, between the process of adjustment after immigrating and the process of mourning the loss of a loved one. It is a gradual process of decathecting from the loved objects.

I want to find myself again
In this house, in this country.
Take a day off from fate
To live it at least in my sleep.
I want to find myself again
By that big window,
Where I could stand with you
At least for eternity, forever, forever.
But I scold myself again,
That I had this dream.
What should I do?
Should I wake up?
But it does not want to end.
I reach my arms for you
And I obediently let in my dream.
On the transparent, unsteady dream

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

That's like a field, I am walking towards you. (1990, p. 100)

In this poem, Olga longs for reconnection with her friend, her home, her country. At this point it could be called "homesickness." Later on, however, her feelings become more nostalgic.

> I only have nostalgia only for the country, for places where I lived, you know, like childhood, to go back to childhood. I am sure that if I grew up here, I would have come back to places where I grew up. Because I... I have this stability, you know, lack of desire to change something. (p. 48)

De Vryer (1989) distinguishes between homesickness and nostalgia. While homesickness can be resolved by returning "home," in nostalgia the longing is for a lost past without a desire to actually return. It is characterized by a bittersweet feeling and memories of places and non-human experiences. While the awareness of the loss is painful, the presence of these objects in memory is soothing.

> You know, like they say that teenagers dealing with exams have the most stress. The same goes for immigration. [ ] If you look how many people go to see psychiatrists, psychotherapists. Immigrants probably constitute the majority in New York. Because it is a terrible stress. You drop everything, you leave... You basically consciously leave and cut off yourself from your life, you know. From what you knew, from the country, from people, from the ways of life, from work, you know. Or, well our parents from work. We - from school, from some... I mean complete impossibility of return. You know, because even if we can come over and look, to visit... My husband went to visit. And now he secretly told me that he could no longer speak the same language, to find a common ground. He felt that it is slipping through the fingers, you know, he can no longer touch what was there before. [ ] It probably speaks to your *mental health*, so to speak, how good it is. Whether you have good predisposition for *adjustment*, you know, in the world. Some people cannot deal with certain things. They protect themselves, it's just some *defense mechanism*. Others *adjust* well. They have good *support* of friends, parents, you know. (pp. 75-76).

Olga eloquently describes why immigration is such a stressful experience. In her family, the immigration experience led to her parents' divorce and the extended family's break up. Olga speaks of losses, separations, and the need for good defenses and support. Similar to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

other participants, she does not describe it as a trauma, but rather something one can adjust to.

Theme 4: The stability of relationships is very important to me and they played a major role in my adjustment.

> (You told me that one of the things that helped you the most was friendship, let's talk about your friendship with M.) Yes. Friendship, parents' support, meeting my husband. Yes. (Human...) Stability, stability of relationships. You know, like my husband and I, for example, you know, it's like with any boyfriend, stability of the relationship is zero. Because you never know what is happening. It is this way everywhere, no matter where I could be. Friendship - it's quite stable. Everything that happens within it - it's between two people. You know, she leaves or whatever, but you know that your friend is a relative chosen by you. You know, you accept certain things. Parents - they'll definitely not go anywhere. And if they love you, you know, surround you. And I had a female family anyway. And in a year or two, excuse me for saying this, everyone came in crowds. And now there lives a huge Jewish meshpuha simply within a one to two block radius from each other, you know, throughout all Rego Park. That's why no matter where you go, everyone knows you. Faces familiar from your childhood. People who, you have something to talk about with them. People can give you some *perspective*, you know. There is stability of the fact that you did not leave for nothing. (p. 76)

Olga refers to several different aspects of stability. On one hand, her need for stability is about her own insecurity and need for some type of ties to avoid loss and rejection. This need speaks to who she was and who she is. On the other hand, it is about holding on to any constant thing while everything around you changes. Olga emphasizes the importance of family and community to provide such stability. In addition to living in a Russian community, she interacted with other Russian immigrants in college. Similar to Lena, Olga desperately wanted to get married to have such stability. While Lena was completely recreating her lost family, Olga wanted legally sanctioned security with her unpredictable husband. In general, every participant spoke about stability as an important need in their lives.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

Theme 5: Immigration experience was liberating and helped me to discover myself.

> Suddenly I discovered myself. I never danced. Suddenly I began, you know, to dance. Never thought of myself, you know, who am I. You know, I was such a, such a modest girl. With these hair clips, in a uniform (smiles). [ ] And when I came here, I was absolutely stunned by the quantity of everything. It was terribly interesting. And the opportunities in general. You know, I suddenly discovered what music I like. Discovered that I am absolutely not... You know, I turned out to be the kind of person I imagined myself to be in my stories. Things that I allowed myself to do, I could not possibly do that before. [ ] I never behaved myself the way I wanted to. Because everyone knew me there. You know, it was already *defined*, you know, *personality*. (p. 35)

Olga does not speak of a *change* in her personality. Rather, there is a gradual process of *discovering* what was already there. This transformation was not noticed only internally. Her best friend's comment in a letter confirmed her own feelings. Olga was constricted by the self-view imposed by others and by societal norms. Moving to a new environment freed her from some of these constraints. I had experienced a similar discovery. Regina, Natasha, and Lena also spoke in different ways about the immigration experience allowing them to be who they are, to separate from parents, and to become more confident. I also wonder whether Olga's age at immigration and the developmental task of identity consolidation played a role here.

Theme 6: Immigrating to the US was the end of my childhood.

> You become wiser. Especially the *wisdom* that comes [with the realization] that *life sucks, basically*. Because you cannot imagine how *badly* you can be *hurt*, you know, *for summary*. From the letters I wrote, wrote, I found out that I was getting older, the conversation topics were just more mature. [ ] You begin to notice that your parents are getting older, grandparents are sick. *Possibility* that someone could pass on. [ ] It is a big *loss of innocence*, you know. [ ] And that's why this absolutely *painful awareness* that people are *fragile*, you know, they are not permanent. And that your *relationships* are not permanent. (p. 88)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Immigration - the only change that happened - it is *realization* of certain things. Sort of like there are certain financial, bureaucratic barriers, you know. [ ] Maybe I would have had to deal with them when I went to *college*. [ ] Maybe my parents would have had to bribe someone and I would have not dealt with it. Maybe I would have encountered it at work. When I would have not been able to grow and push my ideas. I mean I don't know how it would have been, if I did not immigrate. But immigration became a push for certain things. *Disillusionment*, you know, loss of childhood to some extent, I guess. (p. 89)

> You know, every person develops as... If I wanted to remain a child, *in spite of everything*, I would have remained a child. I would have closed my eyes, I would have closed my ears, and kept jumping over a rope, you know. It was a *conscious choice*, you know, to realize everything and grow up. And the death of friendship did not occur because we continued communicating. Simply, *if you will*, death in a sense that it is like the end of a certain *chapter*.. (You mean, that life ended?) Yes. Yes. Like I told you, before and after. It was always there. Before immigration and after. (p. 91)

Once again, the themes of death and immigration appear to interact. Like any other transition during which one experiences losses and separations, the immigration process becomes a turning point of awareness. When a child encounters death for the first time, it is a moment of growth, a realization that people are mortal. Similarly, when one immigrates, she realizes the impermanence of relationships and objects. However, I believe that Olga also speaks about other losses - her breakup with her husband or her parents' divorce. It is the loss of trust. Similar to Lena, she is hurt by those who betrayed her and carries that hurt with her.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Theme 7: Being Jewish in the US was confusing and I had to adjust over time.

> You know, seriously, the awareness that I am really a Jew only hit me here, because here I saw what it was. Over there, it was simply a sense, knowledge that you belong to something different. You are not a Russian, you are not a Ukrainian, you know. You are something else. But this understanding of what it

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> means and what it carries. Yes, I knew that Jews were killed during the war, but that was very far from me. You see, nothing ever happened *immediately* to me. (p. 58)
>
> Here some people, the older generation, look at you and sometimes ask, wonder. [ ] They ask questions: "Well, you were running, you were probably persecuted, you probably wanted to practice Judaism?" And you are sitting there, "Ah, hm, (smiles) wanted, wanted and now we celebrate." No, I tell them the truth. I say that when you are persecuted, you run not because you want to celebrate. But because you know that (smiles) your children won't be accepted in the university even if you give a huge bribe, still not much *possibility*. (p. 44)
>
> Here everything changed. You know, you are thrown into it here. They immediately put a label on your forehead. Because you came here as a Jew. So you are judged by everyone as a Jew. You are not a person anymore. [ ] People don't understand, people think, you came, you ran so you should look like a Hasidic Jew. [ ] And the fact that I came as a person, I don't know who I am yet, eighteen years-old, you know. And yes, I am a Jew. And I am very proud of it. And I would like to learn what it is, you know. But you are already labeled. Everybody asking, "Where are you from? You are a Jew? You came from Soyuz? *How it feels? What are you feeling?" "What are my feelings? I don't know*, I don't know what you mean." And it was an *adjustment* at first. At first it was crazy, you know. [ ] I mean, it [persecution] probably happened to some people in other places. I am sure. [ ] They realized, especially our parents, that it could not continue like this. [ ] They did not tell us because who needs it anyway. Or they simply sat there and trembled, they could not tell anyone. Let's say it didn't even happen, but this constant trembling, it just fatigues you over the course of your life. And now we are here. At first everyone was pushing it on you. Later I began to calm down. You know, I felt relieved. Because I got used to people asking, people *expected* that I am *Jewish*. And I began to accept it. (pp. 59-60)

In terms of Olga's understanding of what it meant to be Jewish in the former USSR, it became clear throughout the interviews that it was something unspoken. It was a sense of difference and fear, as well as pride and belonging. It was not something she had to define for herself. Upon immigrating, however, she was challenged not only to understand it, but to explain it to Americans. As with many other participants, there appears to be a mutual disappointment between Russian and American Jewry. The fact that many Russian Jews began practicing Judaism in America because of their fear of being

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sent back to their native country speaks to their lack of understanding. At the same time, American Jews' expectations of Russian Jews' religiosity was quite off base. However, how Russian immigrants react to this disappointment varies. In Olga's case, there is a process of adjustment from shock to anger, to resentment, to acceptance. Moreover, this acceptance does not mean accepting the views of American Jews, but rather figuring out what Jewishness means to her and how she can express it. For some the reaction may be a blind acceptance of Judaic religion and practices, while for others it may be a complete rejection. Olga approached this conflict and struggle as many others in her life: with thoughtfulness, reflection, and empathy.

Theme 8: Being Jewish for me is about family and belonging. Jews are survivors.

> I know that I am *Jewish*. And I don't see myself as anyone else. I have no inclinations towards Atheism or whatever, but I also don't have, never had any inclinations towards Judaism as a religion. You know, it's just like... I just connect myself with history and people more, you know, with what happened more than with religion. [ ] I meant simply history, persecution, what happened. That thing that people deny that Holocaust happened, it's just... I don't have it like I believe in Torah or I read Torah, no. But I respect it. If we go, you know, I read a prayer, I cover my head and we celebrate holidays, you know. (pp. 41-42)

> For me it's about family. I do it because I gives a *warm feeling* that I unite with my family. It brings me closer to who I am, who we are, to our roots. It gives me a sense of some history. You know, of belonging. But not because... You know, I still have his *pride* from what was told to me. *Pride* that *"Thank God*, I belong to these people." [ ] I only wanted a Jewish [husband]. [ ] Because I always had this sense that... I saw some people there who dated or married someone of different nationality, or other religions. I am sorry, it's a difficult moment. Especially when it is all connected to parents. And it starts - who is the child? And who are you, you know. "And you are a foul kike, you know, and all your people are kikes," etc. And the child starts, "Who am I? I don't want to be this Jew. Who needs this." [ ] *Obviously* my child will know that he is a Jew, will know. I... all holidays that we celebrate now - it will be a family thing, you know, all these *meals*, we know what to cook. I am not saying that I will be lighting candles every Saturday with my daughter. *God forgive me*, you know. (pp. 46-47)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Like many Russian Jews, Olga focuses on culture, group belonging, roots, and history as the meanings of Jewishness. It is an affective experience that may be difficult to describe, a "warm feeling." In addition, Olga longs for constancy and family connection. Olga now has an opportunity to have the kind of family she imagines. In part, such family is rooted in Jewish history, traditions, and culture.

There is another element in what it means to be Jewish for Olga. Similar to Lena and Regina, she identifies with the fighting and surviving qualities of Jews.

> Yes, we are Jews. So what?
> Why are we being chased for centuries?
> Why do the grimaces of ugly mugs
> Fix their gaze on us?
> We don't give up, we live
> To spite the idiots and Pharisees.
> And we ask you a question:
> Can't Jews have a place on Earth?
> Who told you that you have the right
> To point our place.
> Yes, our fathers are right,
> We are made out of different dough.
> You envy us? So?
> You have a lot to learn from us.
> But don't you sharpen your weapons
> Aiming them on our holy borders.
> We will proudly look into your eyes,
> We'll defend our Holy Land.
> (1989, p. 99)

While Olga's narrative focused more on benign aspects of Jewishness, her poetry is full of fire and passion. This is one more aspect of her life where she expresses her inner core.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Masha**
**"I feel overwhelmed and need emotional connection."**

*Masha is a young woman who looks older than her stated age and appears depressed. We knew each other through a professional relationship and Masha at first was hesitant to participate in the study. She had some difficulty scheduling the second interview and expressed her concern about revealing too much about herself. However, she was able to relax during the second interview and became the only participant who invited me to her home. Masha often used psychological terms and focused on emotional aspects of her life. Knowing that I am married to an American, Masha appeared self-conscious about her own adaptation in the US. She mostly spoke Russian and only occasionally used English words.*

Masha is a 32 year-old married woman who lives with her husband and two children, a 7 year-old son and a 3 year-old daughter, in New Jersey. She has been married for 12 years. Masha works part-time as a social worker in a community mental health clinic and as a private mental health consultant for her parents' business. At the time of the interview she was in the process of quitting the first job due to the difficulty of working and taking care of her children and ill relatives simultaneously. Before immigrating to the US, Masha graduated from college as an English interpreter and was studying to become a psychologist. While she stated that she enjoyed her work as a social worker, Masha felt that she was unable at this point to pursue her wish to specialize in treating children under the age 5. Her husband has an MBA in finance and works as a programmer on Wall Street. Masha reported having few friends and feeling isolated, stating that she felt there was nobody there for her. Masha stated that she had no free time and that, if she had any free time, she wished to exercise, read, and develop professionally. However, she was clear about enjoying spending what time was available

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

with her children. Masha's parents live 10 minutes away from her.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Masha immigrated to the US at age 23 with her husband and his family from a large Russian city 10 years ago. She was quite clear during the interviews that she did not want to immigrate. Having witnessed at age 9 some of her relatives emigrating in late 1970s, Masha remembered seeing her family cry and talk about this event as a death. Even before she married her husband, Masha demanded to know from him whether he was planning to emigrate. At the time, he had no interest in moving. However, in the late 1980s, her sister-in-law decided to apply for immigration. Since Masha's father- and mother-in-law stated that they would not apply unless the whole family were moving together, she and her husband became "hostages" in this situation. They agreed to apply but hoped that they would not have to move. Masha did not remember how and when they finally decided to emigrate. She was able to acknowledge that her husband wanted to emigrate due to the anti-Semitism he experienced. He grew up in a large city in Ukraine, which is known for its anti-Semitism. At the time of their immigration, Masha's husband commuted for his job between Russia and Ukraine and spent one week a month in his native republic.

Masha described having a serious depression following the decision to emigrate. In the period prior to emigration she had been in graduate school studying to be a child psychologist and was actively engaged in the psychotherapeutic community. She was happy and had no desire to move to the US. Masha repeated several times that she was not ready to immigrate and stated that the only motivational factor for her was the need to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

separate from her parents. She described her mother as controlling and jealous of her relationship with her husband. Masha's mother was critical and expressed doubts that Masha would be able to adjust well in the US. Her father, however, was quite supportive of the move, believing that it was not only a good decision to leave their turbulent country, but that it was also good for Masha's development. She believed that she was only able to cope with the move with the help of anti-depressant medications. In addition to her lack of desire to emigrate, the pre-immigration time was stressful because Masha witnessed the coup in Moscow in 1991 while seeing her sister-in-law off to the US. After seeing tanks on the streets and having to deal with the military curfew, Masha experienced her first panic attack. In addition to immigrating as Jewish refugees, Masha and her husband applied for graduate programs in the US. They were both accepted to the same small college in upstate New York. When they arrived in the US, Masha was unable to cope with moving away from her family and friends, and her husband was concerned about financial difficulties associated with going to school.

Masha divided her adaptation process in the US into four stages: before immigration, before her first pregnancy, before her parents' arrival and receiving her CSW, and after her daughter's birth. She felt terrified and panicky before immigration, depressed before her first pregnancy, overwhelmed before her parents' arrival, and somewhat more stable after her daughter's birth. Upon their arrival in New York, Masha and her husband first lived in the Bronx where they were twice burglarized. Masha immediately engaged in the process of applying to graduate programs in psychology and social work. Although she was accepted to a doctoral program in psychology, Masha felt that her emotional state and their financial resources did not allow her to pursue this path.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

She began attending a social work program. In addition, through NYANA and personal connections, she became involved with a not-for-profit agency which provided funding, as well as educational and employment opportunities for former Soviet professionals to become social workers in the US. Masha felt supported by them and still feels grateful for having had people around her who were going through the same process.

Masha described this period as being "comatose." She reported beginning her own therapy at that time. She was depressed, exhausted, and anxious. Masha experienced loneliness and a lack of intimate relationships. She believed that her husband was quicker to adjust to life here and blamed her for her inability to be more active. However, they both missed the feeling of comfort they left in Russia, the feeling of knowing and understanding things. During this period, Masha still wanted to get an education in the US and go back to Russia to contribute to the field of psychology.

By the end of her second year in the US, Masha's son was born and her parents arrived. She believed that her son's birth helped her and her family to adjust here. He provided a focus and an opportunity to distract themselves from the stressful reality of the new country. Their son's birth also provided more opportunities to interact with Americans. Masha described that period in the immigration process as very busy. Masha spoke about her difficulty coping with her studies, work, child care, dealing with her parents, and marital tensions. She believed that her son still carries the weight of those problems on his shoulders. Masha described his emotional and behavioral problems, which require psychotherapy.

During the four years before her daughter's birth, Masha reported improvements in her marital relationship and interactions with her and her husband's parents, and greater

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

stability in their lives. When her daughter was born, Masha experienced intense "maternal" feelings for the first time and was not as preoccupied with her adjustment process, as she was when her son was born. In contrast, as things became more stable, her husband had an internal crisis. He believed that to "want" something was a luxury he could not afford. Having focused on providing for his family by pursuing careers and jobs with a stable income, he became depressed after realizing that he was unhappy in these jobs. Even before immigrating, he enjoyed journalism and writing and wished that he could do that for a living. He was able to change his responsibilities at work in order to do more writing and editing of technical articles for his company, which helped him to feel more satisfied.

Over time, Masha realized that she did not want to go back to Russia anymore. She lost touch with her social connections there, with few exceptions. She spoke about missing streets and places, rather than people, with whom she could no longer find a common language. While Masha had no difficulty with English, having learned it in Russia, she mostly focused on her difficulty interacting with Americans. She and her husband wanted very much to become a part of American society. Yet, they felt that the Americans they interacted with did not want to be involved with them. Masha stated that she was having difficulty interacting with other Russian immigrants as well. For a while, she did not want to go back to visit Russia out of a fear of re-experiencing the terrible feelings she had during the immigration process, as well as because of political and economic instability there. Now, Masha would like to visit there when things become safer and more stable.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

Masha spoke about her immigration as a significant event in her life and told her son that it was an overnight change. She described it as a "small death." In a way, Masha felt relieved after arriving in the US and realizing that her life continues. She often talks to her son about immigration and becomes upset if he says negative things about Russia or Russian people. When asked to free associate about the immigration process, Masha stated that it was difficult, it was the right choice, and that it meant living in a third country. When explaining the meaning of "living in the third country," Masha spoke about her feeling that she does not belong to either the American or Russian community. While visiting Europe, Masha and her husband enjoyed the fact that they did not fully belong to America or Russia and liked being in neutral territory. While there, Masha remembered feeling "pulled" to visit Russia and being terrified of it. Being in Europe helped her reconnect with her past, while avoiding the potentially painful experience of going back to Russia.

The immigration process was "difficult" because of the emotional impact it had on her. She believed that her depression and panic attacks were the direct result of this stressful experience. Masha stated that being forced to emigrate also contributed to these problems, which, she believed, would stay with her for the rest of her life. Immigrating was the right choice because of the economic and political turmoil in Russia and because it provided an opportunity for her to be more independent from her parents.

Masha's sense of not belonging to either the Russian or American community applies to her interactions in the US. She does not like visiting the Brighton Beach area,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

stating that she did not feel the Russians there were "her people." When she spends time with Russian immigrants, she feels frustrated with their lack of psychological mindedness. When Masha interacts with Americans, she feels that she works too hard to be understood. She spent a considerable amount of time during the second interview trying to explain to me why this was the case. Masha gave examples of her difficulty finding a common language with Americans, such as her experience of play dates with American compared to Russian children and mothers, or her interactions with teachers. She believed that, while her conversations with Russian mothers focused on practical and honest advice, her interactions with Americans remained superficial and closed. Masha expressed some irritation with some Americans who tried to teach her how to live.

She felt that she was not as well adjusted in the US as other immigrants of her age. Masha believed that to be well adjusted and successful meant accepting an "American" way of life. She stated that she was not able to have the same emotional contact with Americans that she used to have with her friends in Russia. The examples Masha provided of experiencing emotional contact in the past focused on instances of receiving emotional support. Several times during the interview, she compared herself negatively to her sister-in-law, who is more focused on her own development and satisfaction, more active, and less preoccupied with taking care of the extended family.

Masha stated that while her immigration process helped her grow, this growth came at a significant emotional cost. She believed that her growth included a newly acquired ability to be direct and open in communication with her husband and her parents, to be more realistic and practical, and more active about getting her needs met. Masha reflected that in Russia she was passive, infantile, and quite dependent on her parents.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Now, she stated, she cannot allow herself to be weak or to feel overwhelmed because she needs to take care of her children. Masha also commented that her age at the time of immigration had an impact on her adjustment. She believed that she matured here: she got married, moved out and away from her parents, graduated from college, immigrated, and got pregnant all within a two-year period. Masha believed that it made her adjustment process much more difficult.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Masha grew up in a mixed-marriage family. Her mother was Jewish and her father was Russian. She lived for many years with her maternal grandparents who became a significant influence on her life. Her grandfather, who was a member of the Communist Party, secretly attended religious services at a synagogue and taught her some traditions. Masha's paternal grandparents were openly anti-Semitic. Her father was an open and dedicated family man who had to give up a career opportunity when he married a Jewish woman. While her parents registered Masha as a Russian on her birth certificate and gave her a Russian name, Masha always considered herself more a Jew than a Russian. While in elementary school, she insisted on being recorded in her teacher's journal as a Jew. She frequently defended Jews when anti-Semitic slurs were made, both in school and in college. Masha was determined to marry a Jew and believed that it would make her "three quarters Jewish."

Masha first realized she was Jewish during her elementary school registration. At that time she began asking her grandfather questions about Jewish holidays and traditions. Masha stated that being Jewish is very important to her. It means belonging to a group of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her people, it is a blood connection that provides emotional comfort, and it is about family. Only after the birth of her son did Masha become more interested in religious aspects of Jewishness. She told the story about her obstetrician, an Orthodox Jew, who helped them with her son's circumcision. Having had to make certain decisions during that event prompted Masha to think about her own identity as a Jew and what she wanted to pass on to her children. In general, she described having positive experiences with American Jews and reported feeling more comfortable with them than with other Americans.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF MASHA: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: I am depressed and isolated. I need emotional connection with others.

> If I could put it into words, I just have a sense that I feel overwhelmed by life, I don't have enough energy for it. For... I crawl, well, into a *safe place*, well, to get some relief. I feel lonely there. But I... For me, well, until I get some rest, I have no strengths to get out. *It's not a good thing*, you see, in general, for any person or for any adaptation. I mean overall... I mean I lost my energy a long time ago. (p. 30)

In addition to her reports of depression in the past, both Masha's depressed affect and her frequent mention of fatigue during the interviews speak to a significant level of depression. There are many life tasks she has to attend to, such as dealing with her children and their development, her work, marital relationship, relatives with medical problems, and parents. Masha is overwhelmed by these tasks and feels burdened. However, this is not a new feeling for her. Masha confirmed that her anxiety and depressive symptoms began prior to her immigration and were exacerbated by additional stress later on. Moreover, my guess is that her depression began even before there was any discussion about immigrating. As I noted in the literature review, the immigration experience can contribute to pre-existing emotional difficulties, rather than cause significant deterioration in functioning. The way Masha is coping with these feelings is by isolating herself. There was also a sense of resentment she expressed during the interviews about having no one to turn to:

> And in this life, well, there is no one in this life who would call and, well honestly, would sincerely say, "Well, how are you?" And so on. [ ] We are not very mobile because we have children, but we'd love to have people over. Who would consider it... Moreover, I now hear "It's your own fault, children are growing, it's your fault, you have to..." Well, yes, we probably have to, but it's about energy. We have to get out, have to build our life. Have to. But I don't know when. Because we are tired. And when we, maybe, have a couple hours and we could go, we don't want to. Just this fatigue... (p. 31)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Masha told me about her disappointment that nobody called to wish her happy New Year this year. While in the past she would always make an effort to call everyone, this year she decided not to.

Several times during the interviews Masha commented on not having enough "emotional contact." While at first she focused on having difficulty connecting to Americans, it became clear that this was a theme in her life. I wondered about her friendships and the meaning of "emotional contact."

> There is one person that I like to call in Russia, she is an acquaintance, older than me. Before we immigrated I was taking workshops on child therapy. In 1991. And I... I knew her before, but the workshop was five days, eight hours a day. Very *intense*. And... I was in bad shape back then before immigration. And she... She asked... She approached me, "Are you leaving?" I said, "Yes." She says, "C'mon, come on over, we'll talk." And I met with her several times. And... Here. This is emotional contact. I call her from time to time. So that's what [emotional contact] I need, that I have. (p. 29)

I believe that "emotional contact" does not mean intimacy or sharing for Masha. In the above quote she basically received free therapy. It was an older professional woman who "took care of her." Two other examples of feeling connected involved her high school teacher and her son's therapist. "Emotional contact" or "connection" for Masha is about satisfying her needs for support and care. As I will demonstrate below, she may also be using her children either to express her own conflicts or to satisfy her needs.

## My immigration journey: from there to here

Theme 2: I did not want to immigrate.

> It [pre-immigration] was the most difficult period in my life. You see, the thing is that when I was getting married, I tortured my husband whether he was going to leave or not. He was saying that he was not. Because from my early childhood,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> when I was 9 or 10, the daughter of some relatives left to come here. And everyone cried and said that it was like death. It was in the 70s, when there was no contact and I, as a child, remembered that it was almost death. (p. 3)
>
> And later I don't remember how we decided to emigrate. I had terrible depression. Because I entered graduate school, everything was so interesting, I had a great circle of friends-psychotherapists, who... Psychotherapy was just beginning there, we met in basements, Americans came, the ones who are not even approachable here. I did not need this America at all. (pp. 3-4)

As noted before, the literature is clear about the negative impact of forced immigration on one's adaptation process and emotional adjustment. Compared to other participants who described mixed feelings of excitement and loss before immigrating, Masha's feelings are completely negative. First, she was quite content with her professional situation in Russia. Second, she was terrified of leaving and having to cope with a potential "death." Yet, not at any point during the interviews did Masha talk about refusing, resisting, or protesting her husband's and his family's decision to immigrate. Neither did she express any resentment toward her husband for making her go through this painful experience. Masha's passivity during the pre-immigration period and internalized anger are consistent with her overall way of approaching the world. In addition, her childhood perception of emigration as death is so traumatic that it may reveal a certain preexisting difficulty in dealing with loss. The context of Masha's immigration, i.e. feeling forced to immigrate, a deteriorating political and economic situation, the 1991 coup, the community leaving, all exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities she had.

Theme 3: Immigration was a significant change. It was like a small death.

> Recently I was talking to him [my son] about why we came here... hm... He has a complicated relationship with Russia, with our country... well, it's not a very good country... here... hm... Last year, yes, right, when I was writing this article – I was presenting in Westchester about Russian group therapy – I was thinking and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> talking a lot about this back then. We were driving in the car and he asked... hm... I mean he said, that "my sister and *me are lucky*." I said, "Why?" ... hm... "Because we don't have to live through such a difficult thing because we already live here." [ ] I remember, that last year on November 30th, it was the anniversary of our arrival to America, and I was telling him that ... I was just overwhelmed by feelings, that... I talked to him for a long time about the soil... That from generation to generation our family, well, was living and, well, dying, being buried in the soil of that country and that in one night all this changed, in one flight. And that, well, now everything will happen here and, well, we are the founders of life on this soil. (p. 16)

Once again, Masha connects immigration and death in the same sentence. She talks about the change in the predictable way of life, the change in the routine of generations, and the destiny of starting over. We can see her struggle and her resentment through her son's words. It is clear that Masha not only shares the history with her son, but also shares her inner turmoil with him. She is unable to contain it and appears to have no other venue to cope with it. While Masha is aware of the impact her difficulty adjusting had on her son, she does not seem to understand the potential consequences of talking to her son about these topics.

> It was so incredibly difficult... hm... just took so much emotional... strengths. (How did it get expressed?) In everything. I think there was a large amount of emotional energy being spent. And probably on a very... not always aware of it. V. [husband] would tell me, and I understood him, that when I was riding a bus, I wanted to ride and feel myself the way I felt on a bus in Kiev. And this feeling, this toska[20] for certain sensations, for the familiar. But aside from this life, how complicated it is and trying to figure it out... I guess many people arriving here feel themselves more liberated. Hm... I cannot say that... I had this, I said, this, well... counter... well a certain conflict with this reality, with how everything works here. That's why my liberation is happening at some different level, of course. Well, the helplessness that was felt during the first years. (p. 8)

Like many other participants, Masha speaks about missing her "average expectable environment" (Hartmann, 1959), longing for the familiar feelings of comfort. She then

---

[20] "Toska" is a sense of anguish and longing. This feeling is widely accepted as a normal and integral part of Russian culture.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

compares herself to others who felt "more liberated" and acknowledges her resistance to adapting to this new world. I believe that her "conflict with this reality" is more than the typical splitting between the new and the old as described in the literature. Rather than expressing her anger at her husband and his family, Masha resisted the American way of life. It is no surprise that she feels less adapted than others and is unable to connect intimately to Americans.

> Yes, I did not... I mean I did not want to, but I wanted... You see, maybe, I did not really think about it, but for me, and I don't know whether I already told you or not, that when I was leaving Russia, I had this sense of a small death. Maybe, well, it was really intense. And maybe simply when I was already here, when the flight..., that something let go and I realized that I am alive. And that, well, that [I have to] live. Not just by forcing myself... However, there were periods of terror... terror, when I did not see any meaning whatsoever. During the first years of immigration. I guess the first New Year, I think. I don't remember, it was winter. When it was simply a complete gloom. Yet at the same time, I don't know... [ ] I think I lost this feeling here. But I was, I left Russia with a sense that *I am an achiever*. I had strong motivation to learn something here and bring it there. (p. 37)

While Masha acknowledges a certain level of relief after arriving in the US and not actually "dying," she is much more focused on the negativity of experience. Unlike Regina, who spoke about being depressed at night yet excited and busy during the day, or unlike other participants who focused on survival and learning in those first months upon arrival, Masha experienced "gloom," a "comatose" state, and "lack of meaning." It is especially remarkable that she lost her sense of being "an achiever." In distinguishing mourning and melancholia, Freud states, "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is ego itself" (1947, pp. 237-58). Anger and resentment toward the lost object is turned inward. Freud also points out that, "In melancholia the relation to the object is no simple one; it is complicated by the conflict due to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ambivalence." Masha's depression, or melancholia, can be also understood as a response to her inability to cope with her ambivalent feelings about immigration. While on one hand, she did not want to move, on the other hand, she was terrified of staying in a country with tanks and weapons on the streets. I also wonder about an aggressive function Masha's "comatose" state served. While she was never able to express her anger at her husband for initiating the move, Masha's depression and inactivity put the burden of adapting and surviving on his shoulders.

It is also interesting to note that Masha's description of the phases of her immigration process focus on her family transitions: before immigration, before her first pregnancy, before her parents' arrival and receiving her CSW, and after her daughter's birth. After immigrating, a certain level of relief and increased comfort is brought upon by someone else, whether it is her children or her parents. It is significant that Masha described the emergence of intense maternal feelings for the first time at the birth of her daughter. It is conceivable that it was not accidental and was precipitated by a change in her internal feeling of comfort and increased stability.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

Theme 4: I matured through immigration process at a significant psychological cost.

> (How did immigration affect you as a person?) (Long pause) I grew up, but I paid very big psychological cost in terms of my own nervous system. (What grew up?) What grew up...? (Pause) Probably just... Life in America, perhaps, thank God, is much more real than... People are used to... Life is real in any country but the way people think about life is different there and here, and here people think more realistically about real life. They call things their own names. (p. 17)

> I think that my relationship with my parents healed because they and I went through the same process, because relationships here are more direct, so to say. (Without beating around the bush...) Without beating around the bush, but rather

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> carry something that, well, can be hot sometimes, or not, but the questions are discussed more clearly. [ ] In terms of medical questions... It was a great, well, process to learn, you have to fight for your health. For yours or for your children, well, and so on, I mean nobody will give you anything here *unless you ask for it.* (p. 18)

At first, Masha is not able to answer the question about her maturation. I believe that her difficulty is related to the fact that she still appears to be in the midst of this process. In addition, for her the "cost" of this maturation outweighs the benefits. She refers here to depression, panic attacks, and fatigue. I would also add that, similar to her husband, she sacrificed her professional development in order to survive this stressful transition. In spite of all this, Masha did mature. While she may have wished that things were "given" to her, Masha learned to stand up for herself, be more direct and more open. Her ability to do so could only develop as she engaged in the process of individuation and separation from her mother.

Theme 5: Immigrating pushed me to separate from my mother.

> I was much more emotional, was very dependent. I was very dependent on my mother, she dominated me, I was afraid of her and ... I, well, changed in this aspect... and perhaps, maybe, I was even too infantile. In the sense that I was very, I could afford... well that's how I am formulating it for myself now, that back then I could feel differently, feel *overwhelmed*, and now, especially after the birth of my children, *overwhelmed*, not *overwhelmed*, but there is no way out... (p. 18)

> My parents were torturing me with this [immigration]. But my dad was very positive about it. [ ] Now my mom is actually happy that it happened the way it did, but back then it was just scary. And her reactions did not help. (For example?) Like "How are you gonna be there, I just can't imagine." I am already nervous. "I can't imagine how you are gonna live there? And what if we never see each other?" [ ] You see, it all coincided. I got married, she just could not deal with the fact that I grew up and was separating from her. And there was strong jealousy. (When did you get married?) In 1989, in January. We left two years later, well, the paperwork took a year. She was really jealous of my husband and you could feel it everywhere. (p. 10)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> (You said that the process of separating from your mother and immigration coincided. And that it's difficult...) Right, and that ... I mean... and that it's difficult to separate them and that for a long time I was much more preoccupied emotionally with separation from my mother and getting on my own two feet that it, so to say, it led to the fact that V. had to deal much more with practical part of life and that, from that, of course, we had tensions, so to say. It smoothed out gradually. (p. 19)

The literature on separation and individuation is full of references to loss, mourning, and movement, both physical and intrapsychic. Masha commented a number of times on the importance of her separation from her mother, more than any other participant. While in part this could be explained by her career in the mental health field, it appears to be a major issue for her. Masha acknowledges that her dependency on her mother negatively affected her ability to adjust well in the US. I wondered whether her unresolved mourning appears to be related to this difficulty in separating from her mother, both physically and internally. I was struck by her description of the childhood experience of others' emigration as "death." It may not be unusual for a child to have a strong reaction to a perceived permanent separation from a relative. However, it is unusual for a child to have such reaction to a loss of a distant relative and to continue feeling as strongly as an adult. We do not have enough information about Masha's early experiences with her mother to speculate about their contribution to the apparent difficulty with losses and separations. Instinctively, however, there appears to be a connection between them. Masha's process of separation and individuation from her parents was delayed. Moreover, considering her focus on this theme, the fact that she works for her parents and gives a unidimensional descriptions of her parents may indicate that the process of individuation and separation from her parents is not yet complete.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Theme 6: I do not belong to either Russian or American community.

> To live in the third country? Well, with every year I feel less and less pulled there [Russia] and more and more scared to observe the political events there. [ ] ... In America, well... There is a certain sense of isolation in America because... We were in Paris this year. I know that it's tourism and so on, but at least there was a stronger feeling of being at home at a certain level, than in America, in terms of culture, mentality, mostly in culture. I mean, right, it was only a week, but even in the landscape, it's not all plaid, like Manhattan, well, the parks, trees, small streets, and so on. Here... I often have this... I can't be around Russians for too long, I want to interact with Americans. Long interactions with Americans are, so to say, frustrating in the end and, so to say, so that's the sense of isolation. (pp. 5-6)

> I had such a strong sense that I am approaching Russia. That I am returning to my soil, on this soil. To this continent. And that I am close. And it made me, I *felt pulled to get there*. It passed after a few days. And there, V. and I talked about how great it was that we don't belong to either of these worlds. That our language, that they associate us, how GREAT it is that we are not Americans. And, so to say, that we are from Russia, we felt ourselves *vaguely*, I don't think we have a full right for it, but we felt ourselves as Europeans. [ ] If we went to Russia, it would have been more complicated. In America has its own... And here, it's like neutral waters. (p. 42)

According to traditional acculturation topographies, Masha belongs to the "marginalized" group, a group of immigrants who experience themselves as not belonging to either native or new cultures. She had great difficulty providing examples or explaining why the interactions with Americans or Russians were a problem. It seemed to be focused on this internal sense of discomfort. I believe that Masha's pre-existing vulnerabilities hinder her from successfully resolving an internal conflict related to American and Russian cultures, as well as to her old and new self-representations. By "successfully resolving" I do not necessarily mean integrating or having healthy ambivalence about America and Russia. Masha is also unable to use splitting successfully, that is, to have a firm standing in the paranoid-schizoid position. Rather than having both positive and negative feelings towards both cultures, Masha feels frustrated with both of them. She and her husband are

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

more relaxed and comfortable in the "neutral" territory where they do not have to experience any "pulls." I believe that their trip to Europe provided some transitional space for Masha to be able to even consider a potential trip back to Russia.

> We had a goal. We wanted... To become more... We wanted to understand, we wanted to get through [to] Americans and to understand and to feel them, and to touch them. And so on. Here. And then more... more like... often like this sense that we have different motivations with Americans. Because it was like this many times. When, well, we wanted but nobody wanted us. You only have so much energy. And then your desire disappears. (p. 22)

I was impressed by this explicit expression of having a goal and a desire to "get through [to] Americans" and a feeling that "nobody wanted us." Whatever internal and external barriers to a better integration into American society existed for Masha and her husband, this conflict between having a goal and not being able to achieve it contributed to their marginalization. Once again, I question the commonly stated goal of "integration" existing in the literature on adaptation. Boris and Lena described some difficulty in establishing intimate relationships with Americans, but did not talk about having any discomfort about it. Natasha was clearly comfortable in her "Americanized" life and having no intimate relationships with Russians. Does it reflect their ability to be aware of their limitations and set appropriate goals for themselves? Possibly it does.

### Jewishness: then and now

Theme 7: I always felt more as a Jew.

> I always felt more as a Jew than a Russian. (Why do you think?) I don't know, maybe because I was raised by my grandmother and grandfather, Jews. Maybe because there was so much tension around this question from early on and I, well, I insisted that they registered me as a Jew in the teacher's journal, not as a Russian. [ ] I always defended all Jews, while having a Russian last name. I don't know, my blood, I don't know, I believe that my blood laid this way that it was mine, I was drawn to it, I needed it, I don't know. I only wanted to marry a Jew, well I don't

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> know if I could have met someone else, but I say that when I got married, I became three quarters Jewish. (p. 13)

First, I would like to comment on Masha's ease and lack of internal conflict about her Jewish identity. Similar to Boris, in spite of other inner conflicts, this was one area of clarity for Masha. It is probably related to her positive experiences with her grandparents and lack of family tensions about it. Although her father's family was anti-Semitic, her father was an open and dedicated man. Similar to Regina, being half-Jewish did not necessarily mean the rejection of Jewishness. Quite the contrary, Masha embraced it. However, we get a glimpse of the impact the extended family and societal tensions had on her. Wanting to be "three quarters Jewish" speaks to some sense of being incomplete.

Theme 8: Jewishness is very important to me. It's about a sense of belonging and a family.

> (What does it mean for you to be a Jew?) ... They are my people. They all are... it does not mean that they all are my relatives, but... well... it's blood. I cannot completely, I mean my appearance, I don't know what, but if I feel that I belong to a group of people walking on the street, then I feel that I belong to them. [ ] Family connection that is very strong, it, of course, may sometimes squeeze your psyche, but on the other hand, its existence is better than when it's missing. It's just my feeling. (pp. 14-15)

Once again, being Jewish for Masha is not primarily about religion. It is one group she completely belongs to. She also emphasizes the family connection, no matter how conflictual it may be. Masha commented on how her son is first and foremost Jewish. I believe that Jewishness provides a bridge between Russia and America, a bridge Masha wishes to build desperately. As noted above, the one subgroup of Americans she feels comfortable with are Jews. Being Jewish is an affective experience that defies logic or external labels. It has nothing to do with the "fifth line" in your Soviet passport or the Judaic requirement of maternal lineage. Moreover, it is a changing, rather than static

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

construct.

> My gynecologist was an orthodox Jew and he... He suggested that we start going to synagogue, he arranged for my son to be *circumcised* - he sent us a person on the 8th day who was supposed to do it. It was a very emotional, so to say.. [ ] My mom was very happy and V.'s father was happy. We were given Jewish names, we have a document. It was great. [ ] It made us think about our own *identity*, so we could pass on this *identity*. Then we started thinking whether to have a tree or not[21], to celebrate holidays or not, and so on. It was a big *push* in a sense of trying to figure out *where we stand.* (p. 12)

The birth of Masha's son and having to make certain decisions about his religious upbringing pushed her to question the meaning of her own Jewish identity and subsequently engage in performing certain Judaic rituals.

[21] It was traditional in the Soviet Union to have a New Year's tree, something roughly equivalent to a Christmas tree, but with no relationship to religion.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Anna**
**"I am a survivor."**

*Anna is a tall attractive woman with a distinctive personal style. Her appearance was strikingly different during the two interviews. When we first met, she was casually dressed, wore no make up, and had a cast on her foot. During the second interview, I barely recognized her as she approached me walking down the street. Anna wore a sexy outfit, had makeup on, and had styled her hair. As we talked casually before the interview, she told me that she actually broke her toe while kicking a wall after getting upset with her son. Anna was open about her experiences, expressed her emotions passionately, and had a great sense of humor. She often changed topics when the theme was upsetting. Anna spoke Russian colorfully, used metaphors and slang, and occasionally used English words and phrases. I met her boyfriend during the first interview. Several days after the second interview, Anna invited me to a music concert where I met her family. Anna had a positive transference to me which she expressed openly throughout the interviews. Anna commented on the similarities in our experiences: the age at arrival in the US, time lived in America, and interest in psychology. She expressed her desire to be a psychologist like myself and regret that she did not pursue it. Anna told me that I look like her mother and that she felt compelled to tell me the truth about herself, in contrast to trying to hide things from her psychoanalyst in the past who then "rejected" her. During the second interview, she frequently emphasized the positive impact our meetings had on her. She began painting again after 7 years, she understood things about herself, and was able to talk about things for the first time. While I was impressed with Anna's maturity and strengths, I at times felt a pull to take care of her.*

Anna is a 31 year-old divorced woman who lives with her 11 year-old son and 25 year-old American boyfriend of two years in a low-SES neighborhood of Manhattan. She moved there five years ago after living in Brooklyn. Anna pointed to a difficult transition

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her son had when he became the only Jew, the only Russian, and the only White child in the school. More recently, Anna's boyfriend insisted on and helped her son gain admission to a private school for gifted children. She often worries about his safety and environment. When her son recently mentioned that there was a grocery store which sold cigarettes to children, Anna stated that she was so upset that she wanted to blow up the grocery store. In terms of raising her son, Anna said that, while at 19 she thought she knew everything about parenting, over the years she felt she knew less and less about raising children. However, if possible, she would like to have more children.

Anna is a graphic designer and is currently on unemployment after her Internet company went out of business. Anna learned graphic design on her own and stated that she enjoyed her work and felt successful at it. She had always dreamed of becoming a psychologist and is still wondering whether she should pursue this career. Prior to immigration, Anna had little formal education. She married at age 16, graduated from high school, divorced, and had a child from a relationship with a married man soon after. When a new graduate program in marketing and advertising opened in her city, she applied and was accepted on the strength of her test scores despite having no undergraduate degree. Anna stated that she received most of her education through books, her father, and the father of her son.

Anna's current boyfriend grew up in the South; his parents are a psychologist and a psychiatrist. He works in advertising and marketing and at one point tried to start his own company. While Anna stated that this relationship had been her longest relationship in the US, she is not sure whether they would stay together. Her boyfriend, however, is quite committed to her and her son. In her free time Anna loves reading, writing, going to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

museums, and attending concerts. Her son and her boyfriend often join her in those activities. She especially enjoys staying up late in the kitchen[22] with her boyfriend drinking wine or tea and talking about life and philosophy. Anna talks almost daily to her father and brother who also live in New York city and sees them on a regular basis. Her father, however, refuses to visit her because her boyfriend is not Jewish. Anna is very protective and motherly toward her brother and believes that her father is an exceptional person. Her mother died several years ago from cancer.

### My immigration journey: from there to here

After her parents' divorce when she was 15, Anna was quite unhappy. One day she decided to commit suicide by throwing herself under a car. Since she loved classical music, her last wish was to go to a concert. It was during that concert that she met her first husband, who was 10 years her senior, and changed her mind about suicide. They arranged to be married through the court system and Anna left her parents. Her father did not talk to her for two years after that. Anna divorced her husband a couple years later due to severe physical and emotional abuse and became involved with a married man. She only learned about his marital status when she became pregnant. He was a highly educated, cultured, and intelligent man with a successful career. While Anna acknowledged his influence on her, her relationship with him was quite tumultuous. As she tried to convince him to leave his wife, Anna often threatened suicide and begged him on her knees. Eventually, he did help her financially and arranged for her to work with

---

[22] Kitchen in the former USSR was more than just a place for cooking. It was a place for private sharing and communication.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

him.

Anna immigrated to the US as a refugee at age 22 with her one year-old son from Russia 9 years ago. The first time immigration was brought up was when Anna's mother was diagnosed with cancer and they began to worry about the requirement for her brother to serve in the Soviet army. Anna refused to immigrate with her mother and her brother because she was happy in Russia. She was going to school, working, writing and reading poetry, and enjoying her independence. At first, she was excited about getting her mother's apartment and the possibility of visiting the US. Anna's son was born a year before her mother's departure. During that year, she stated that she had many arguments with her mother. Only when the date of their departure approached did Anna realize the significance of the loss she was about to experience. She felt that her world "crumbled." She was especially terrified of losing her brother whom, she said, she loved more than anything in the world. Anna engaged in the routine of her life, taking care of her son, working, and studying, which helped her cope with this loss.

Anna's mother and brother immigrated to one of the Northwestern states on a sponsorship from a Jewish community there. They were only the second Russian family there. Anna stated that her mother and brother received a lot of support from the Jewish community. In particular, she named two American Jews who were remarkably helpful to them. About a year and a half later Anna received a call from one of them telling her that her mother was dying and that her brother would subsequently be placed in foster care. Anna stated that she could barely remember the process of immigration after she made the decision to join her mother and brother. The father of her son and the Jewish community in the Northwest helped her with documents and travel arrangements. She came with her

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

maternal grandmother, maternal uncle, and her son. When she left, Anna felt that her life ended. Upon her arrival, she began taking care of her mother. Anna described that period as very traumatic and difficult. Anna had to learn English quickly in order to take of her family. She did not understand the American way of life, cried all the time, wanted to disappear, and wished to go back to Russia. Anna felt quite isolated as she had no one to talk to. She described that first stage of her adjustment process as a "shock" accompanied by a negativistic attitude: "I don't want to be here and don't want to do anything."

When her mother's cancer appeared to remit, Anna moved to New York to be closer to Russian community and culture. However, she soon received another call telling her that her mother was getting worse again. At the same time, Anna's apartment burned down while she and her son barely escaped, and her landlord stole her legal documents and was extorting money from her. Anna went for help to representatives of the Russian-Puerto Rican Mafia who retrieved her documents and did not charge her after learning about her situation. With the Jewish community's help, she went back to Northwest and took care of her mother until the day she died. Anna had to make the decision to not resuscitate her mother on her last day. She spoke about the significant impact her mother's death had on her. She felt that it showed her that she can do anything, that she can survive under any circumstance. Anna continues to have feelings of guilt and regret about her mother. She said that she did not feel she did enough for her mother, that she argued too much with her before immigration, and that she felt sorry that her mother missed so much in life. Anna commented that she always felt stronger and more mature than her mother. She was never able to work through her grief and continues to have flashbacks of difficult moments of her mother's illness and death. As Anna spoke to me

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

about it, she mentioned having chest pain, indicating how difficult it was to think and talk about it even now.

After her mother's death, Anna decided to move to New York for two reasons. First, her brother began smoking marijuana and was expelled from the university for poor grades. Everything there reminded him about that humiliation and about his mother's death. Second, Anna longed for Russian culture, something missing in the Northwest. After they moved, she had to take care of her brother and her son in any way she could. Anna began working in a strip club to make money. She hated it and had hysterical outbursts every night she performed. In spite of the difficulties, Anna stated that she felt better in New York and that her adjustment softened. She had the support of her extended family and newly acquired friends, she had Russian and American cultures available to her ("Brighton Beach and Metropolitan Museum of Art"), and slowly began to adjust. Anna stated that she felt alive again. She described that stage of her immigration process as passive acceptance of the fact that she was here.

After being threatened by other strippers at the club because of her moralizing lectures there, Anna quit her job. She became engaged in some type of business, which she refused to discuss. She lived in Connecticut for two years and traveled to Russia and around the world. Anna spoke about the positive impact of her first trip to Russia. She felt that she rediscovered parts of herself she left there. She reconnected to Russian culture which helped her to adjust better upon going back to the US. However, Anna described her initial shock of realizing the differences in the two cultures and how she changed. While meeting an old friend of hers during that trip, Anna was told that she had become harsher, more independent, and more self-confident. Anna noted her friends'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dependency on men and focus on material things. She also spoke about her realization that the country she left was no longer there. During one of the trips, Anna met a young man whom she married and paid a large sum of money to bring her to the US.

After she became uncomfortable with some aspect of her business in Connecticut, Anna quit and moved back to New York City to where she lives now. At that time she arranged for her father and paternal grandmother to immigrate to New York. Anna became frustrated with her husband, who did not work or help out around the house, and divorced him soon after. She edited a Russian newspaper and organized Russian parties for a period of time. Then, while visiting her father at work, also in a newspaper, Anna was introduced to graphic design and became hooked. At some point she began working for an English language newspaper where she met her current boyfriend. While at first she invited him to rent a room in her apartment in order to help her with the rent, they soon became romantically involved. Anna stated that she dated both Russian and American men, but would typically break up within months. She attributes the longevity of her current relationship to her boyfriend's ability to understand her, to tolerate her craziness, and his commitment. In general, Anna stated that the current stage of her immigration process is characterized by active acceptance and nostalgic feelings.

Anna stated that she has both Russian and American friends and acquaintances. Most of her relationships with Americans are with men. She continues to feel that they do not understand her completely due to the language and cultural barriers. However, Anna finds it even more difficult to develop a relationship with American women. She explained that she generally feels closer to women and cannot lie or play games with them. Anna stated that she had to acknowledge that there were good Americans after her positive

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

experience in the Northwest. Anna spoke about a gradual process of learning English through books, soap operas, and interactions with Americans. However, she feels that she would never be able to express herself as eloquently as she does in Russian. She misses an ability to read her poetry to others and be published. Anna commented that she finds it easier to talk about emotionally difficult topics in English as it allows for certain distance.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

When asked about the impact of her immigration experience on her as a person, Anna spoke again and again about her ability to survive and becoming stronger, while at the same time developing a defense system "not to feel loss and pain." She provided a metaphor for herself as a Phoenix, a bird from ancient Greek mythology which is burned and rises from its ashes. Anna often used the word "zakalka"[23] to describe the impact of numerous events on her. She now felt prepared for anything. Anna stated that, after the first interview, she realized how much her own negativism contributed to her sense of dissatisfaction with her life. She agreed she had reasons to be negative, having been forced to immigrate and having had to survive the way she did. However, this negativity interfered with her ability to pursue her dreams. Anna also provided a metaphor of a "cut" to describe her emotional experience of immigration. When someone has a small cut, there is sharp pain which is quickly healed. However, when the ligaments are cut, the dull pain remains in spite of healing. One may not run as well or function in other ways as well. In terms of immigration experience, "ligaments" refer to the comfort of knowing one's environment without having to ask about things.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Anna stated that being different and strange was not a new feeling for her. She felt that way as a Jew throughout her life in the former USSR. In addition, Anna believed that she was taunted and abused as a child because of her unattractiveness and loud personality. Over time, she learned how to handle herself better, to use makeup, and developed a distinctive style. Nevertheless, Anna acknowledged, deep inside she remained that vulnerable and lonely child. Anna believed that her ability to fight back and defend herself helped her to cope better with immigration. However, she emphasized that she will forever be an immigrant, someone who is different. And this time, no matter what, no makeup will help.

Anna emphasized a number of times her feelings of instability, her search for something, and the lack of a sense of peace throughout her immigration experience and now. While she feels somewhat more stable now, Anna continues to long for inner peace and emotional stability. She stated that she has a tendency to jump around in search of something. However, now she wonders whether this jumping only contributed to her difficulty finding inner and relational peace. Anna continues to remain nostalgic about Russian culture and soul, Russian language, and her uniqueness and place in that society. She identifies herself as "a Russian living in America" and would never consider herself to be an American. Anna has warm feelings towards the people of Brighton Beach and its atmosphere because she understands them and feels connected.

**Jewishness: then and now**

---

[23] "Zakalka" has several meanings, one of which is used to describe the process of tempering steel to make it stronger.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Anna grew up in a non-observant Jewish family. Only recently she learned that one of her ancestors was a rabbi. She learned about her Jewishness through anti-Semitism. When she was a child and was asked by neighbors whether she was a Jew, Anna went to her parents for explanation. They told her that it was a nationality, it was a blood connection. There was only one other Jewish family in their neighborhood. The Jewish culture of her household, including food and music, was a given, so much so that Anna did not realize other families did not have it. Anna remembered crying when Jewish songs were played without any awareness why she was crying.

After she started school and it was discovered that she was the only Jew in school, Anna was beaten, taunted, and rejected by other children. At first she tried to keep a low profile and disappear. She did not want to be different and strange. However, Anna acknowledged that "there was too much of her" and that she was disliked by teachers as well. She described how her father raised her to be stoic and intellectual. Anna wore unattractive, boyish clothes and expressed her opinions openly. As the assaults continued, she was transferred to another school where she again became an object of anti-Semitism. Only this time the abuse became more severe. Anna described one particular incident in the 6$^{th}$ grade when other students held her down and put heated needles under her nails demanding that she denounce her Jewishness. Anna was hospitalized briefly and transferred to another school which, she believed, saved her life. In this new environment nobody was interested in persecuting her. Moreover, she made friends and was surrounded by artistic talents. Anna stated that all her negative experiences with anti-Semitism only made her stronger.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In her adolescent years, Anna became proud of being Jewish and began defending herself by fighting. When her brother was physically attacked by other children because he was Jewish, Anna became so enraged that she went to the school playground and yanked the child's arm so hard that she broke it. Approximately at the same time she was not accepted into Komsomol[24] because she was seen near a synagogue. Anna also described how her father took her to a synagogue for the first time after he defended his doctoral dissertation. He did not tell her where they were going and forbade her to talk about it. When Anna's son was born, she had no idea what circumcision was and why it was done. However, when the father of her son wanted to baptize him, Anna had an immediate negative visceral reaction and refused to do so.

Since Anna's immigration to the US, the meaning of her Jewishness has changed. She remembered disembarking the plane and meeting her brother, who told her that they did not eat pork anymore. Anna was surprised and asked him why. In response, he told her that it was because they were Jews. To that, Anna stated, "But so are we." She began to learn more about Jewish religion and traditions. Anna enjoys going to synagogue, lighting candles on Shabbat, and listening to a rabbi reading Torah. However, she continues to search for the right synagogue and the right rabbi, someone who is honest and passionate. While Anna feels uneasy in an Orthodox synagogue because she does not know the words of the prayers, she is uncomfortable with the looseness and liberal attitudes of the Reformed synagogues. In general, Anna felt that in Judaism and the Jewish community in the US she finally found a sense of stability and belonging she was searching for, a sense of ground.

---

[24] Komsomol is the youth communist organization in the former USSR.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Anna emphasized that the meaning of being Jewish is not easily explained with words. It is something inside of her, something salient. It is something that cannot be taken away from her. She believes that one cannot become a Jew because it is impossible to know the meaning without experiencing it. Anna also spoke about a sense of responsibility for continuing the Jewish nation as an important part of being Jewish. It is one of the reasons she does not want to marry her boyfriend. Because her boyfriend is an atheist, Anna cannot imagine not raising her children Jewish. She spoke about belonging to this group of people and a sense of pain for those who died in Holocaust. Jewishness for Anna is also about culture and pride.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF ANNA: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: Life's challenges make me stronger, but they also make me numb.

> You know the story about the bird named Phoenix? There was a bird named Phoenix who died – it was burned – and came back to life from the ashes. Much stronger than before, than it was before. It's an old fable about... The mythic hero – Phoenix. [ ] What does not kills us, makes us stronger. Phoenix, in many aspects it's my hero. I never thought about it in regards to myself, but I always loved this character. I mean it's tempering, you see. It's tempering. (Does Phoenix come back to life the same as it was before or changed?) Changed. That's exactly it. Of course changed. Of course, her brains are knocked off after that. Nobody comes out of a fire with normal brains. (laughing) You see? The head is all messed up. Many things are forgotten. Just because it is not possible to remember them. No strengths. Otherwise you have to hang yourself. I guess it [the Phoenix] probably comes back to life, looks around: "Fuck! Shit! What happened here?" So then you try not to get into the fire again. You see? In general, you life is now guided by the task of not getting into the fire. (p. 58)

Actually, "Phoenix" is the Greek name for the Egyptian mythological bird, Bennu, which was a symbol for the rising sun. According to the myth, Phoenix built its own funeral pyre, light it with the beatings of its wings, and burn to ashes. Then a new Phoenix grows out of the ashes and the process would repeat every five hundred years (Evans, 1970). This character and the story serve as a projection of Anna's view of herself. She is a survivor in the face of a dangerous world. However, Anna's description of the myth about Phoenix only captures one part of her story, i.e. coming back to life. Anna believes that she not only survives, but grows stronger. This survival comes at a cost of becoming careful and trying to avoid becoming emotionally hurt. However, one may wonder whether Anna, like a moth rather than a bird, is attracted to the fire. It is ironic that the mythical Phoenix makes her own fire - like Anna who can sometimes put herself in difficult and dangerous situations, such as being a stripper or in a mysterious business in Connecticut. Having said that, I do not mean to minimize the painful events in Anna's life

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

which were out of her control, such as her parents' divorce, her mother's illness and death, or apartment fire. Anna approaches every difficult situation with a fighting attitude. She is wonderful at "living through" them, but she is not so good at actually working through them emotionally. This theme of survival and numbness was present in her description of her experience of her parents' divorce, her history of abuse in Soviet schools, the departure of her mother and brother from Russia, the impact of her mother's death, and her overall experience of immigration. While I was quite impressed by Anna's ability not to give up and hit the curve balls life throws her, I also remembered my maternal countertransference. I had an image of a little girl holding on for dear life to her stuffed animal, alone and unprotected.

Theme 2: I can be impulsive and reactive.

> (Talking about anti-Semitism) If my child told me something like that, I don't even know, it's terrifying for me to imagine what I would do. I would probably just kill someone, you know, go to jail. When [my brother] was beaten up... [ ] One time I could not take it anymore, I ran to the school. One kid kicked his tooth out. And he came home all beaten up and in spit. It was terrible. Literally, kids spit papers at him. And with a missing tooth. My eyes grew dark. I ran to school. Found this Spitsin. I still remember his last name. Grabbed his hand. He was little, I don't know, maybe in third grade. I grabbed his hand and threw his body against the wall so hard that I broke his arm. Then I hit him until they pulled me away. (pp. 51-52)

This is an elaborate description of an incident of Anna's impulsivity and difficulty with affect regulation. Other examples include her history of suicidal ideation and gestures, leaving her parents and getting married at age 16, taking various jobs, changing boyfriends like gloves, wanting to "blow up" a grocery store, her angry outbursts with her boyfriend, or suddenly beginning to paint after our first interview. When wondering about the origins of this difficulty with affect regulation, I think of Anna's harsh father who,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

rather than comfort his four-year-old who hit herself, would ask her to think what she was "punishing" herself for. Or I think of her grandmother who, before giving Anna a Band-Aid for a cut, would tell her that she deserved it. When I asked her who empathized with her or took care of her, Anna told me about her stuffed animal whom she talked to. As I stated above, I had a sense of someone who was lonely and forced to take care of herself to the best of her abilities. There is no question that Anna's impulsivity had an impact on her immigration experience. This impulsivity and reactivity can also be described as aggressiveness which serves a defensive function for Anna. By becoming aggressive, she externalizes her feelings of shame, sadness, embarrassment, and internal rage.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Theme 3: I did not want to immigrate and resented being here.

Similar to Masha, Anna was quite clear that she did not want to immigrate for many reasons.

> I refused to go. I said, "I won't go. Native land is in danger (laughing). You gotta stay, you know, in the home front." And so on and so forth. And in general, I hated America with all it's white-teeth-ness and optimism. I mean, it all goes against my nature, you see? I mean my nature is pessimism, to sit in tears in the kitchen and talk about the lost generation, read Bunin, and look for analogy with revolution. (p. 10)

Her first stated reason for not wanting to immigrate, which was not without sarcasm, was her desire to stand by her country in turmoil. Considering her activism and strong identification with a Russian soul, as well as her age at the time, it was probably a genuine reason at that moment. More important, however, is that Anna knew herself well enough to predict that American culture would clash with who she is, with her identity as a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Russian.

> Emotionally I knew that at the moment I crossed the border, I knew that my life ended. That I will never, that everything, that I had 22 years, I lived them the way I should have. It will never happen again. I knew that now I will do what I HAD to do. I would not live the way I want. I knew it 100%. (p. 14)

While Anna made a conscious decision to move based on her feelings of responsibility for her mother and her brother, she is devastated by the perceived consequences: not being able to live her life as she expected it. Like Masha, Anna describes her initial view of immigration as a "death." It appears that being forced to immigrate or having no say in the decision is affectively experienced as dying. Yet, the feelings of sadness, pain, and loss are universal. As Anna described me her poems about immigration, they sounded very much like Olga's.

> I happened to be here not because I wanted to come here, but because the circumstances turned out this way. And now, there are not options to go back, complete insanity and here... On one hand, a comfortable feeling that you won't starve to death, right? You can always feed your child, to cloth, roof over your head. On the other hand, the psychological comfort, well, it won't happen, it's not realistic. (p. 3)

> I mean the negativism that I brought with myself from the very beginning, that nothing is possible, that life is over, it [negativism] constantly took me away from actualizing my dream. Common, like I could not go to college? I could. I could make... Yes, first my mom was sick, I couldn't, then I had to wiggle my ass to make money. Of course. But still, people think of something, they stand on their feet somehow. And I could, I know I could. Go to some evening classes, et cetera, but I constantly... like this sense that "why bother?" (Life ended anyway.) Yes. You see? I mean my negativism kills everything. (Well, in part, this negativism was because you did not want to go, it was a forced immigration.) Yes. Yes, absolutely. Yes. 100%. I did not want to go. I was satisfied with everything there. I had a good apartment. My mom left me. Two bedroom with big kitchen. You see. I had friends more or less who... I had money more or less. I knew that if anything, I could always make some money – to write, to organize, you know... (p. 14)

Anna experiences many confusing feelings. She acknowledges some level of economic

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

stability she has in the US as compared to Russia, yet she longs for psychological comfort. She resents being forced by circumstances to immigrate, yet she realizes her own contribution to her lack of self-actualizing. Anna speaks to the process by which one can make the best adjustment, a process which involves letting go of one's anger and resentment.

Theme 4: It was a gradual and difficult process of accepting my immigration.

> First phase is a shock. [ ] It's a shock and a feeling that you don't want to do anything, you don't want to be here, you don't want to live. Next is that it's *OK*. I am already here. There is nothing you can do, there is no way back. And melancholia starts, you know? But not an aggressive one, you know, not aggressive negativism, but passive melancholia, you see. I mean an acceptance. But not active acceptance, not that "*Oh, OK, cool*, now will be do something, no. Just such melancholic nostalgia. And the period I am in right now is "OK. Time to do something." (p. 24)

> If you get a deep cut, through ligaments, it will hurt all your life. The pain is dull. I mean you know what it is, but you can live with it now. But it is modified, you know, it became a dull pain you can live with. You know how it is, that it already happened, that you can no longer use this ligament. You can't play tennis, can't play the piano. But, let's say, you can run sprint, you see... (p. 18)

Anna appeared to have read Grinberg and Grinberg's description of three stages of internal assimilation into the new environment noted in the literature review. Anna states that she is only beginning her third stage of active acceptance and change. As noted before, the process of mourning is an essential part of the immigration process. Anna distinguishes between aggressive and passive melancholia during the first two phases. I believe that the "aggressive" melancholia refers to the shock and emotional pain she experienced which led to her active rejection of American life. Among all participants, it appears that this active rejection was present for only Masha and Anna, the two people who were forced to immigrate. It is interesting that only Masha and Anna used the word

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"vacuum" to describe their emotional isolation and loneliness during the initial stage of adjustment. Anna's metaphor of a deep cut is similar to Vlad's metaphor of a broken bones, which will be described later.

Anna describes a gradual process of adjustment. As noted in the literature review, a number of factors facilitate and assist immigrants in this process. First, Anna is coping with the difficulties of her adjustment by engaging in a daily routine. She used the same strategy to deal with the loss of her mother and brother when they left Russia. Second, Anna's move to New York and the support she received from relatives, friends, and community was essential for her survival and adjustment. In addition, the support she received from the Jewish community in the Northwest was also quite important. The literature is clear about the importance of the support from family, as well as native and receiving communities, in the process of acculturation (Akhtar, 1999; Birman, 1994; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Similar to Masha and Boris, Anna stated that having a child was also helpful. It provided more opportunities to interact with Americans, as well as other Russian immigrants who had children. Both Masha and Anna spoke about their children as being the only thing that belonged to them, that was "theirs." In the context of the forced loss of everything they had, their child represented a present object they could hold on to. What is particularly striking about Anna's experience is that she was absolutely clear about her need for the Russian environment she was missing. In contrast to Masha who had negative feelings about Russian immigrants and wanted to "integrate," Anna had a better awareness of her needs.

> (Talking about her first trip to Russia.) It was a wild shock. That I was such a person. And the return to yourself, you know. If I didn't go, it would have been much worse. It's good that I went, yes. (Why?) Because I got a little bit of myself

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> back. I left myself there and I got myself back, added to my construction, you know? [ ] It's a return to your own self, you know. And more of a sense of peace when you come back here. You know, these attempts to adapt, they take us the wrong way. Take us the wrong way so much that you reject what makes you yourself. And you come back and get it back. [ ] And when later you come back, you can already afford [talk about the dog[25]] sometimes, even with Americans, even in the wrong situation. And I would still talk about the dog. You just afford more. Because you know that there are several millions people who talk about the dog. You know? (laughing). (p. 30)

Grinberg and Grinberg state that the desire to recover the lost aspects of oneself in order to make oneself complete is at the heart of "working through the self-mourning process" (1989, p. 93). As noted before, there are two simultaneous mourning processes that occur during immigration: mourning for an object and mourning for lost aspects of the self. Sometimes the beginning of this process involves splitting off parts of oneself in order to adjust to the new environment. Hopefully, as Anna points out, there is an opportunity to recover them. One way to do so is by visiting one's native land and reconnecting with these parts of oneself. Anna's trip made her realize that she does not necessarily have to conform to America's customs because there are millions of people in Russia who share her customs.

## Immigration experience: here I am

Theme 5: Immigration made me stronger but my adjustment to the US came at a significant cost.

> What does not kills us, makes us stronger. That's how it worked for me. If I didn't throw myself out of a window exactly after two months after I came here, then nothing will really affect me. Seriously. Nothing. Well, God forbid, *God forbid*, it's a war or something, that's not comparable, or a death of a close

[25] "Talking about the dog" became a metaphor for Anna's experience of doing business in Russia. She told a story about Russian businessmen who would first spend time socializing, "talking about a dog," before doing any business. In contrast, Americans tend to get straight to the point. "Talking about the dog" also referred to a way of philosophizing about human nature and meaning of life considered typical of Russians.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> person, that's not comparable. From my experience... Well, if I lose a boyfriend, there will be another one. Well, if I lose a husband, if I lose a job... Nothing can get through me, you see, I am invincible. I mean I will survive in any situation. You see? I have complete confidence that *no matter what* happens to me, everything will be *OK*, I will survive. (p. 25)

> I believe that immigration tempers. You know, "How steel was tempered."[26] That's it. (You said that it is not always good. What is not good?) Because such moments... psychologically, you see? It freezes you. I mean, you lose a sense of reality. [ ] I mean, when you lose something, next time you either don't want it or won't notice that you lost it. You see? I don't know, it's like some block, a particular block, appears, some clutter. I don't want to feel pain. (pp. 26-27)

Once again, Anna applies the metaphors of the Phoenix and steel tempering to describe the impact of her immigration process. Immigration becomes another challenge she has to overcome. This challenge has the quality of trauma. When describing her process of learning English while taking care of her mother, Anna compared the situation to surviving in a concentration camp. And while Anna focuses on the immigration experience making her stronger and more prepared for the future, she acknowledges its cost. The themes of rebirth and a deep wound interweave. Similar to Lena who described herself as not being "excited anymore," Anna now has a defensive stance toward life: to avoid failure and loss at any cost. At one point Anna used the metaphor of "stairs" to explain what she meant. She now walks down the stairs expecting that one of the steps will be broken. Another similarity between Lena and Anna is the change in themselves of becoming "harsh."

Theme 6: I long for stability, groundedness, and permanence.

This theme does not require much comment. Words "stability," "peace,"

---

[26] "How steel was tempered" is a Soviet era novel by Nikolai Ostrovskiy about the process of building a railroad under horrendous conditions in Ukraine after the October 1917 revolution. The main theme is the process of human endurance and overcoming obstacles. The author became sick with MS, lost his vision and ability to walk, but continued to inspire the youth.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"permanence," and "ground" were present in almost every participant's narrative. For anyone who experienced a change of this degree, "stability" has a very personal meaning.

> I want to stop,. I am tired of changes. Honestly, I am tired. I want peace. I want a cozy home and a sense that I'll be with this person forever. I jumped around too much, you know? Experimented too much. (p. 6)

> I still today and yesterday and tomorrow I know that this sense of restlessness is poisoning my life, you know. [ ] I still don't have a sense of *ground* under my feet, feeling of soil under feet, you know. When I can say, "That's it, and now we can drink tea every evening." Constant feeling that there is a non-stop search for something I need and did not find yet. (p. 18)

> (Last time you spoke about your wish for peace and stability. What do you think it is related to, age or what you've gone through?) With what I've gone through. what I've gone through. Because I am sick of jumping. Before I thought that the more you jump around, the more chances you have to find what you need. But right now, for some reason I have this feeling that only when you are in the home front... Oh! Oh! I got it. Look. When you live in Soyuz, it is your home front. A priori. Because it is Soyuz, you know everything, it's your... your native land. It's your home front. Right? The only home front that I could have here is my home. It's your home. That's why if your home is a mess, God knows what's going on there, then you have no home front. That's why I think that if I have peace at home, than I will have more strengths and more opportunity to build something. (p. 60)

For some participants, such as Anna, the theme of stability is more present than in others. It is not only related to her immigration experience, but to her life experience of instability. When talking about her parents' divorce, Anna stated that it was the first time that she realized that the relationships can be impermanent. At this point, she longs not only for professional stability, but also for a stable intimate relationship. Considering her history, Anna's current relationship represent substantial progress. Whether this is due to her boyfriend's commitment or her own maturation and growth is not clear. We also, of course, cannot not know whether the relationship will last. However, Anna herself is clear about her wish and need for such stability and peace at home. She used the word "tyl"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

which I translated as "home front." I believe that it is a metaphor for security and base a "home front" can provide for its soldiers.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Theme 7: I was severely persecuted as a Jew in Russia because I was different, but it only made me stronger.

> (When did you first realize you were Jewish?) When I was hit in my muzzle. (laughing). Really, I remember my very first sense, when we had these old ladies sitting by our building, they called me and asked, "are you a Jew?" I said, "I don't know." I went and asked my parents, "Am I a Jew?" and they said, "yes." "What is it?" They said, "well, there are people who are Kazakhs, Ukrainians, etc., and we are Jews." And I said, "but I don't speak Jewish, how could I be a Jew?" "Jew is blood, it's transmitted through blood." That's all. I didn't know any other Jews in my area. Oh, later we had one more Jewish family.

Similar to other participants, like Natasha, Anna's initial view of her Jewishness was about a sense of being different as perceived by others. At the same time, she received positive messages at home about "blood" connection and culture.

> (How did the school changes and what cause them affect you?) The more I am talking, the more I understand that it all affected me one way. (laughing) *To make me as fucked up as possible*. No, I am joking. Again, look what happens. Losses, *resistance*, it's like a sense of yourself as stronger and stronger. Nothing is important. It's like, it is not important who is hitting your muzzle, you know? Because you still have to go on. You don't have an option to stop and say, "Oh, my God, how dare you?" Because you simply don't have time. It happens too often. I think that it's simply zakalka. (p. 51)

Similar to Regina, after the initial attempts to fit in and disappear Anna begins fighting for herself. There is a developmental shift in terms of one's ethnic identity described by many theorists (Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1990). Anna also relates this fighting to her overall theme of survival and "zakalka." Going back to her quote in Theme 2, one has to wonder about her parents' lack of presence in her struggle. While Anna herself would almost kill

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to defend her brother or son, she told me that she did not tell her parents about the abuse because of her fear of being blamed for the situation.

Theme 8: Immigrating to the US provided me with an opportunity to learn about Judaism which finally gave me a sense of belonging and stability.

> What it means to be a Jew? It's a huge responsibility, first of all. It's something that exists independent of anything, you see. It's a given that nobody can take away from me. And even if I wanted to part with it, I can't do anything about that. I believe that you can't find God. [ ] The fact that I discovered Jewishness for myself, in a religious sense, I am eternally grateful to America for that, by the way.
>
> Of course, I'll probably begin with the sense of responsibility. To be a Jew? It's probably to know that they are your relatives, the 20 millions that were eliminated, it's a part of you. That it happened and we survived. It's your responsibility to make sure that we don't disappear as Jews, don't mix with other nationalities. In spite of the fact that we didn't have a country for so long and in spite of the fact that our country now, what does it mean, why it is ours, my heart aches for Israel, but it's not my homeland. It is a personal responsibility that the nation continues to exist, that it would survive.

Once again, the theme of survival is present. Like many other participants, Anna identifies with the history of Jewish people who survived persecution with dignity. On one hand, her sense of responsibility for the Jewish nation was probably cultivated by her family, Jewish community, and her Judaic learning. On the other hand, Anna is someone who takes her sense of responsibility quite seriously. She was responsible for raising her son, for taking care of her mother, for providing for her family. She often put her family's needs in front of her own needs.

> So I stopped eating pork and began celebrating holidays, little by little. It gave me an interesting sense. A sense of belonging, not a stupid kind of participation, here is *a social event, Shabbat*, but really go and listen to people who know what they are saying. [ ] It's a starting point, a sense of ground under my feet that I can't find in anything else. That's probably what it is. [ ] So, it's something that nobody can take away from me. They can take everything, but not this, not Torah. (What is "Torah?"). I'll try to formulate it. It's an absolute knowledge that, no matter how difficult things are for me, I can turn to it and it will have an answer. It's

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> something where I can always find an answer. Not necessarily an answer in words. There are so many interpretations of Torah. A sense of permanency and stability that nobody can take away from me, no matter what. That's probably why it's so important that [my boyfriend] shared it with me. Because it is *my ground, common sense, standing ground*, you know.

First, like many participants, Anna has some difficulty putting the meaning of Jewishness into words. It is something she feels and knows primarily or exclusively on a nonverbal level. However, Anna is quite clear about the sense of stability and groundedness that her Jewish identity gave to her. It is about being accepted, about belonging, and about something that cannot be taken away. Similar to other participants, Anna's Jewish identity is not static. It was affected by her life in the US, her experiences with the Jewish community, and her learning about Judaism. Moreover, we can see how Anna's life experiences contributed to her need for stability and permanence, which she found in Judaism and Jewishness. It is one area in her life that is free of internal conflict and struggle. It is her saving grace.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## Story of Andrei
## "I approach things logically and rationally."

*Andrei is a stocky, medium-height man who was curious about my study and was willing to participate in it. We met three times during his lunch breaks. I knew Andrei through his wife, whom I have know since elementary school. I attended their wedding and was introduced to some of their friends. This connection could in part explain Andrei's hesitancy to talk about his marriage and other personal information. He showed little emotion during the interviews and tended to focus on his thoughts, rather than feelings. However, Andrei became somber and somewhat angry when talking about his father's death. At the beginning of the second interview, he reported feeling tired after our first meeting, "like I worked hard." When I persisted with a difficult question during the second interview, Andrei became more guarded and cut our meeting short. During our casual conversations before and after interviews, Andrei spoke about successful deals he accomplished at work, his interactions with high level officers of his company, and his interest in practical aspects of psychology. Andrei spoke English with little accent, in contrast to his wife who continues to have a thick accent.*

Andrei is a 33 year-old married man who lives with his wife in New York. They have known each other for about a year and a half and were married several months ago. Andrei has a degree in engineering from Belarus and an MBA in technology and finance. He works as an assistant vice president for a large financial company and participates in negotiating technology contracts with vendors for the company. Andrei enjoys negotiating because of its dynamic nature, contacts with high-level officers, and his ability to convince people. Andrei actively pursued this position after working in different departments of his company and feeling unsatisfied with his previous roles. In general, he used the word "negotiation" to describe not only his job activities, but also interactions

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

between people, including the process of raising children and our interview.

In his free time Andrei enjoys recreational activities with his wife, spending time with his friends, reading science fiction and self-improvement books, attending theater and Russian music concerts, and traveling. He also helps his wife study for an upcoming professional examination. Although he is satisfied with their living situation at this point, eventually Andrei wants to have a house with more space and access to nature. His mother and sister live in the Southern US, where they originally immigrated. Andrei talks to them frequently and visits them at least once a year. He and his wife live a couple blocks away from her family and see them very frequently as well.

### My immigration journey: from there to here

Andrei immigrated to the United States as a refugee at age 25 with his family from a small city in Belarus 8 years ago. He stated that he was the major force behind the decision to immigrate. His father visited his relatives in the US in 1975, but decided not to move at that time because he was worried about his ability to support his family with two small children. After Andrei was discharged from the Soviet army, he began to think actively about immigrating. He spoke with people who had immigrated previously and learned a great deal about the reality of life in the US. Andrei arranged for an invitation from his grandfather's 90 year-old brother who had lived in the US since World War I. Although his grandfather died before they were able to leave, Andrei arranged for a commitment of support from another Jewish community. Andrei believed that there was no future for him in Belarus, that the country was falling apart, that anti-Semitism was on the rise, and that there would soon be no one left in their community. He described an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

atmosphere in which everyone was leaving the country. In addition, the Chernobyl[27] explosion was another incentive for the immigration. While attending an immigration interview in Moscow in 1991, Andrei and his family witnessed the coup that led to the break up of the Soviet Union. He described it as shocking, especially seeing tanks and destruction on the streets, and then proceeded to talk about the difficult political situation. By the time the immigration application process was completed, Andrei graduated from college with a degree in engineering.

Upon his arrival in the US, Andrei and his family decided to live in a Jewish community in one of the Southern states. He stated that it was a conscious decision not to live in the Russian community of New York. While he acknowledged that his parents would have rather lived in New York because of the availability of Russian culture and services, Andrei wanted to be in an American environment in order to learn the culture and assimilate. In addition, Andrei's sister was planning to move there to join her boyfriend and future husband who immigrated earlier. Their parents wanted the family to be together and felt that it would be easier financially.

In terms of the actual departure and flight to the US, Andrei said that he felt calm. He stated that his previous experiences with traveling away from home helped him to prepare for this journey. In particular, he remembered going to a summer camp in Czechoslovakia in 7$^{th}$ grade and feeling uneasy. Andrei felt uncomfortable in an unfamiliar environment. His next trip abroad was not long before immigrating. At that time Andrei was vice president of the Jewish community center in his city and organized a trip to

---

[27] Andrei's city of residence was located about 200 miles from Chernobyl. What is important, however, is that the wind currents just after the accident were in the direction of Belarus and his city. Reports indicate that, of neighboring regions, Belarus suffered among the highest levels of radioactive fallout.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

London. He said that he did not experience any uneasy feelings at that time. When he and his family arrived in the US, the members of the Jewish community had a furnished apartment ready for them. He felt as if he had come home.

Andrei was told by members of the Jewish community that he would no longer receive financial support after three months, and so would need to find a job to support himself after that interval. He began working as a mover. Later, Andrei found a job as a technician through an American acquaintance. He stated that he was the only engineer in the company. Eventually, he was promoted and was able to use his skills as an engineer in designing products. During that period, most of his friends were Americans. Andrei stated that the only way to understand and be a part of American society is through communication with Americans. He acknowledged that many of them were above him in terms of the socioeconomic status. However, Andrei maintained his self-respect and dignity, regardless of his status.

In general, Andrei described the first several months in the US as complicated. On one hand, he had received a lot of information about American life before he moved. On the other hand, there were many choices he had to make, something he did not have to deal with in the former Soviet Union. Examples he gave to demonstrate how confusing this was included choosing a bank account and buying a car. Andrei described having difficulty dealing with the unexpected. For example, he would be surprised and startled when the automated doors in a supermarket only open at the last second. In terms of his interactions with Americans, Andrei tried to be quiet and listen in order to learn and understand the culture better. Over time he was better able to understand and make jokes, talk about popular television shows, and have casual conversations. Andrei emphasized

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that he learned things very fast and in about a year and a half he was the one to teach American friends about buying a house and taking out a loan from a bank. In general, because he knew English and quickly learned the American environment, Andrei was the one to make decisions for his family. Soon after that Andrei's father was diagnosed with cancer, had surgery, and died from complications of chemotherapy. At the time of the interview, Andrei was still angry about the possibility that the doctors had made a mistake. After his father's death, Andrei took care of his mother and felt even more responsible for her than he had previously.

After working in for a time as an engineer and improving his English, Andrei decided to pursue an MBA from a prestigious business school in Pennsylvania. He stated that his business school experience opened a new world of opportunities for him. He interacted with successful and well-known graduates of the program, learned about various fields and opportunities, and made both Russian and American friends. After completing his MBA program, Andrei worked as a consultant and traveled in Europe for several months. He then got his current job and settled in New York. Not long after that Andrei met his future wife on a blind date and pretty soon knew that he wanted to marry her. While he stated that in the matters of relationships he typically trusts his intuition and feelings, Andrei focused on the process of proposing marriage and preparing a wedding in a logical and rational manner. He stated that as soon as he knew that this was the right woman for him, he made the decision and proceeded to act on it. He does not believe in living together for a long time before getting married or having a long engagement.

Andrei could not point to specific turning points in his adaptation experience, describing it as rather smooth. When asked to separate his immigration process into

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

stages, he spoke about changing jobs as representing his progress. Andrei described the first stage as the time to gain experience and figure out a plan. During the next stage, he felt that he got back on his feet and was ready to make the right decision about how to proceed next. This coincided with his decision to pursue his MBA. Andrei believed that his third stage began upon completion of his MBA program. Once again, he was gaining valuable experience and is figuring out what to do next. At one point during the interviews, Andrei spoke about the process of reaching his professional goals. In his first job he only engaged in simple labor and executed other people's decisions. In his next position he was able to design a concept for others to execute. And finally, he was able to and wants to focus on making decisions about what needs to be designed.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

When asked to free-associate about immigration, Andrei stated that it was the right choice. He spoke about the current difficult economic and political situation in Belarus as one of the reasons it was the right choice. Andrei believed that if he had remained there, he would not have been able to actualize himself and be successful, as he was able to do here. When I asked him about the impact of his immigration experience on him as a person, Andrei compared the two political systems. He views his Russian background and experience as unique and beneficial for him. He feels free to speak his mind, to go anywhere in the world and work as an equal. Andrei acknowledged that, while it was a difficult process, he has achieved a lot during these 8 years.

In general, Andrei stated that he has no feelings of loss or nostalgia. He believes that rather than losing anything, he has only experienced gain. He sees his Soviet

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

experience as a platform, a base, from which he was able to reach his goals. Andrei set a goal, made the decision to immigrate, and never looked back. In his view, looking back and feeling nostalgic only interferes with moving forward. He believed that the fact that he and his family came as refugees, that they ran away leaving everything behind and had no option of going back, was helpful in their adaptation. It helped to focus on the future rather than on the past. Andrei spoke about immigration as a change that one has to deal with. It is important not to be afraid of change, to accept it, and not look back. As evidence in support of his position, he said had not been back to Belarus and has no desire to visit in the future.

In terms of the process of adaptation, Andrei believes that there are three types of Russian immigrants. First, there are immigrants who are completely assimilated and want nothing to do with Russian culture. Andrei believes that they are trying to prove something to others. Second, there are immigrants, like himself and his friends, who take the best of two cultures and try to balance it. When speaking, they tend to use a blend of Russian and English, because it is easier to express themselves more fully. The third type are those who stay within the Russian community, do not learn English, and do not interact with Americans. Andrei believes that they choose not to interact with Americans or become part of the society. Having lived in an American community for a while, Andrei becomes irritated by the Russian mentality he encounters in New York, especially in the Brighton Beach area. He does not like the rudeness of Russian sales clerks and their attitude that he owes them something. Andrei stated that he would rather pay more money and receive better service. If he is asked about his ethnicity, Andrei tells people that he is from Russia and only occasionally explains that he is from Belarus and that he is

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jewish. If a Russian sports team plays against an American team, Andrei roots for the American team because he feels that he is an American.

### Jewishness: then and now

Andrei first realized that he was Jewish when he encountered anti-Semitism in his elementary school. He used to have fights defending himself. He remembers his parents explaining to him that it was not easy to be Jewish and that the anti-Semitism was caused by misperceptions and a lack of education. They also told him that in order to succeed as a Jew, he would have to work harder than anyone else, to be better than anyone else, and stand out. Therefore, it was important to receive a good education. Although his family was not religious, Andrei remembers celebrating major Jewish holidays without much explanation about the religious aspects of each. Another important aspect of their Jewish life was food.

Andrei continued to experience anti-Semitism during his adolescence and young adult years. His experience serving in the Soviet army was the ultimate example of the depth of negative attitudes towards Jews in the former Soviet Union. Andrei remembers fellow soldiers being openly surprised to find out he was a Jew and that they commented on their belief that Jews were bad. Andrei did not elaborate on his experience in the army, but expressed strong negative feelings related to it. For example, he made a comparison to Nazi Germany. Andrei stated that his experience in the army helped him understand how Hitler and the Nazi party were able to "brainwash" the Germans.

Andrei also described the anti-Semitism he experienced while in college. He did not apply to the local university because of its reputation as the most anti-Semitic college

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in the area. However, he attended its open house, during which he sent in an anonymous question about the issue of discrimination. In response, the administration stated that it was a terrible question and that the college has many Ukrainian, Russian, and Georgian students. Andrei told me that the fact that they did not even mention Jews was the real answer to his question. After he came back from the army to continue his college studies, he tried to get a waiver for the required military classes. Andrei wrote a letter to the college newspaper explaining rationally and logically why the military education in civil colleges was a waste of government money and students' time. During a lecture following writing of this letter, the professor of military education tried to argue with Andrei. After Andrei provided what he considered to be several irrefutable reasons why he was right, the professor told him that if he does not like it here, he should go home, that is, to Israel. When I asked him about his feelings when he experienced prejudice and discrimination, Andrei stated that he felt pity for those people.

Several years before his immigration, Andrei became very active in the Jewish community in his city. He focused his activities on volunteerism, social events, and Jewish education. For example, he was able to receive grants for travel abroad, including taking children exposed to radiation on vacation away from Belarus to improve their health. Only those who contributed to the community would travel. Andrei spoke about being in charge of making decisions about who would go on those trips. He enjoyed telling me the details of solving the problems with the Soviet bureaucracy while arranging the trip to London.

During their preparation for immigration, Andrei's family considered going to Israel. His sister went to Israel several times with the groups of Belarussian children. The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

family was aware of the economic situation in that country and were concerned about their ability to succeed. In addition, Andrei stated that too many Russian Jews in one small place was too much for him. However, he did not elaborate except to say that if one has an opportunity to move to the United States, why not try it. Andrei visited Israel following immigration. He described it as a place "in between" America and Russia in terms of culture and environment.

When Andrei and his family first arrived in the US, they attended a local synagogue on a regular basis. Andrei stated that it was a place to meet people, to get information, and receive assistance with adaptation. He appreciated all the support his family received from the Jewish community. Currently he attends synagogue several times a year during the major holidays. While Andrei goes with his wife's family to a local synagogue, in the future he would like to attend a conservative synagogue because he considers that branch of Judaism to be more reasonable in terms of religious commitment. He stated that Orthodox Judaism is too fanatical for him, while the Reformed Judaism is too loose. During their wedding preparations, Andrei went along with his wife's wishes about the ceremony. According to him, they found the best rabbi in the city, someone who spoke English, Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

Andrei stated that being Jewish means most of all belonging to the Jewish nation. He feels good belonging to what he considers to be the most educated, most intelligent, and simply the best nation in the world. While he feels sorry for the Hasidic Jews because of their fanatic beliefs, Andrei is proud that the Jewish nation was able to preserve its identity over the centuries. Andrei said that he feels most Jewish when he sees unfairness around him. He stated that he does not always explain to Americans his personal meaning

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of Jewishness because of their preconceptions regarding Jewishness as religion. When asked what he would like to give to his children from the Jewish culture, Andrei talked about general human principles, logic in particular. He also wants them to know about history and religion, but not to the point of fanaticism.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF ANDREI: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: I approach things logically and rationally. I know my own value and strengths.

> (*Hypothetically*, what would you want to give to your children from your *background*?) So they have their own opinion, and not just to have it, but so they would be able to defend it, so they could understand logically why, rather than submit to someone else. But at the same time, so they could look at life with maximum objectivity and use this gift which separates humans from monkeys or any other animal. It is to change your point of view if the facts change or circumstances change, you know, so they could change their point of view consciously. (Pause) So they knew more languages, more cultures, so they were educated and saw themselves not as a little screw, but as a catalyst of something (p. 48).

In projecting into the future and imagining what he wants to give to his children, Andrei provided us with a description of himself. Throughout the interviews, Andrei demonstrated his rational approach to life. Whether it is the decision to immigrate, planning his marriage, the choice of where to live, confronting a college professor, analyzing the political situation during the shocking experience of a government coup, choosing a synagogue, or his belief that he can persuade convince anyone of his views, Andrei uses his intellect and rational thinking to address and resolve life's issues. For example, his use of negotiation as a metaphor for human interactions speaks to this style. This is not to say that Andrei is devoid of feelings or "lives in his head." He was simply more comfortable sharing with me his thoughts rather than feelings. For example, when talking about meeting his wife, Andrei emphasized that in the matters of the heart he follows his instincts. He spoke vaguely about his feelings for her, without actually using the word "love." His rationality is a flexible and adaptive defensive style that helped him throughout his life. As I will demonstrate below, this approach helped him negotiate the immigration process as well.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The interview process itself demonstrated his use of rationalization and intellectualization as defense mechanisms. Any time we spoke about something sad, difficult, or potentially negative, Andrei rationalized it. For example, as noted above, at first he spoke of his feelings of shock and disbelief during the coup in Moscow. However, he immediately switched to talk about the difficult political situation. In contrast, Masha experienced her first panic attack in response to witnessing the same coup. Another pattern emerged as Andrei often switched the topic to talk about his achievements. For example, when asked about his feelings during the flight from Belarus to the US, he focused on his leadership of the Jewish community. After describing his feelings of uncertainty and confusion during the initial period, Andrei immediately spoke about teaching Americans how to live. I believe that while he did not elaborate on his feelings of insecurity and loss, this tendency to focus on his achievements speaks to his struggle and discomfort. In general, the theme of trying to be equal or superior to others was evident throughout the narrative.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Theme 2: I made the decision to immigrate based on the situation at hand.

> First of all, who I could have been in Soyuz, for example, I don't know, would have worked somewhere, but you can't live on it [salary] [ ] To do business, you have to have connections with illegal elements. It was not appealing to me, and, of course, there was no stability, no future prospects, economy was always in crisis, inflation, I mean, you don't live, you *struggle*. (p. 12)

> When I came back from the army, people were already leaving, there was already this atmosphere in the air (pause). And so it happened, we looked around like, "What's next? What is going on?" It's not clear where all this is going, not clear what was happening. Aside from that, (pause) there were these incidents, I mean, you know what it is, Jews, so you especially cannot do anything there. (p. 14)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> So I came from the army, I looked at what's going on, I was still in school, people were leaving, I looked and judged the situation. [ ] I came back, looked around and saw that *the best choice* for us and for our children. (p. 16)

First, Andrei's sense of agency in making the decision to immigrate is clear. In general, he is someone who takes the initiative in life. He certainly feels in charge of constructing his identity and is committed to his choices (Blasi, 1998). For example, this is reflected in Andrei's active pursuit of the job he wanted, getting his MBA, and his sense of responsibility for his parents. Immigration was a goal Andrei set out for himself and actively engaged in pursuing. Not surprisingly, the fact that he was an active participant in making this decision had a positive impact on his adaptation process. In contrast, Mark "went along with the wave," which was consistent with his general dependence on others for decision-making.

The decision to immigrate is marked by Andrei's decisive and assertive style of examining a situation, thinking through a decision, making the decision, and implementing it. In this case, similar to many other participants, the decision to immigrate was based on the unstable and unpredictable economic and political situation in the former USSR, the atmosphere of massive community exodus, and anti-Semitism. In Andrei's view, he had no prospects if he had remained there. At this point, it is difficulty to establish whether this would have in fact occurred. While there is no question that it would have been difficult to remain, he continues to look for confirmation that he made the right decision. Andrei's narrative reconstruction of his past provides him with an opportunity to make sense of his life in a way that is ego-syntonic.

> *It's the right choice*, and the longer I am here, the more I am convinced of that. That, I mean, I don't regret (pause), and that in every, again, with every bad news arriving from there, you see that you made the right decision. (p. 11)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Theme 3: It was a gradual process of learning and understanding the environment here.

> (What do you remember about the initial period after your arrival?) Well, the first thing is *complications*. I mean in the beginning we had to, even if you worked somewhere and got some pennies, you had to *set up a bank account*, how to do it. [ ] There are 1000 banks here, every bank has an unknown number of *options*, and in this... At first it was a *mess*, to figure it all out. [ ] Then I knew that there are automatic doors that open, I saw them in London, but still, you know, sometimes you doubt. I mean, once, I approach a door, I walk really fast, I come right to the door, but it does not open and I am a little surprised and I just start trying to open it and – it opens (smiles) and now I am *embarrassed*. I mean, when there is a delay, there is just this feeling, a little bit of uncertainty. (Meaning that you are expecting something...) Yes, meaning – *complicated*, I mean. However, I have to say that only in about a year and a half, probably, after we came, I had to teach Americans how to live in America. How to buy a television, for example, then explained to their daughter how to buy a house, when I've never bought anything there or here, meaning property, but I knew how to do it, I read, I knew it, I wanted to know how to do it. In general, how to *deal* here, meaning to find a *way out*, *way in* and so on, what to look for in order to value things. (pp. 24-25)

Consistent with Andrei's style, his perception of the initial process of adapting to the new environment is "complications." Faced with a completely new situation, he focuses on the process of figuring out the rules of the game, so to speak. Andrei's tendency to focus on the external factors provided an advantage for him in learning the environment in the US. Only his use of the word "mess" may speak to the extent of his difficulties during this initial period. As noted above, after acknowledging briefly feelings of uncertainty and embarrassment, Andrei quickly switches to talk about an instance in which he was "teaching Americans how to live." The latter speaks volumes about his assertiveness and internal locus of control. I would speculate that he is quite uncomfortable being in the position of "not knowing." As I commented previously, Boris and Mark, the two other male participants already described, also focused on "knowing" as a very important aspect of their adaptation.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> With jokes, you try to be careful, because, you know, you have to know the *background*, you have to know the *environment* where it happens. [ ] At first, you had a certain defensive reaction that you try to be less *expressive*, meaning to express your, whatever, to laugh or whatever, you try to silently maybe watch other people's reactions, to see how it is in the *environment*, whether your perception is consistent with others and then to act, meaning to express. I mean, in sum, at first it seems that everything is different, but then, when you look closer, you see that people are the same there or here. (p. 29)

Andrei eloquently describes the process by which an immigrant can enter the new culture. He silently observed others, watched their reactions, learned traditions and habits, and gradually began to interact.

> The most constant in our life is *change, the most constant it's the change*. [ ] I have this, *change*, I mean, to make a decision [to] *change, to follow the change*. The most important thing is not to have *fears* and to look at it that the *change* only brings positive. [ ] To accept it, to understand and act accordingly. I mean, not to *stick* and wait what will happen. (p. 49)

As I will demonstrate in Theme 5, Andrei perceives immigration as a challenge to be overcome, a change to deal with. Once again, he is methodical, and active. In contrast to Mark, who openly talked about coping with "normal fear," Andrei believes that there should be no fear in order to succeed in this transition. He denies any anxiety that many people describe and that is quite normal in dealing with an unknown. I believe that Andrei needs such denial in order to cope and present himself as someone who is competent and confident. At the same time, his openness and willingness to accept change and work through the uncomfortable experiences have helped him to achieve his goals.

Theme 4: I worked on getting on my feet and getting to the next level.

> I came here with different intentions. I had a platform there from which *to jump in*, I mean had a different view. I knew it won't be easy, especially in the beginning, that it's difficult. And I am not going to say that I had it easy or ideally – I went, and I worked different jobs and all, I mean things didn't settle right away. I saw different examples that people get a job right away, settle in, immediately succeed in salaries and everything else. I see that some things were slower for me

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> than for others. On the other hand, however, I had more, I see more than others now, I mean you have to have certain goals. You have to aspire, you have to look at what you are doing and what you want to do. Looking at it as a platform, that you prepare the ground so you could use it in the future and, of course, try to use all opportunities. To use all *opportunities* as much as you can. (p. 27)

Here, Andrei acknowledges that things were difficult for him. His words express subtle resentment that other people may have had it easier. As noted above, Andrei focuses on his accomplishments as a way to reconcile these feelings. He has aspirations and goals of reaching higher levels. The theme of "levels" is very important to him. I can speculate that it is in part related to his experience of prejudice and inequality as a Jew in the former Soviet Union. This certain quality of grandiosity was also evident in Andrei's description of interactions with Americans during the initial periods.

> You meet many people that you look at and think, "Damn, if I was in their *shoes*," so to speak. When you see that you are much more educated, when you see that your culture and world view is much higher, that you are much more prepared for... You see that they are better off because they were born here and, let's say, English is their native language, it's easier for them and... [ ] You see that some of them are losers and you don't even want to interact with them... (p. 36)

There is no question that the kind of downward social shift almost every immigrant experiences causes a narcissistic injury. The denigration of Americans and their culture at the beginning of one's adjustment is a frequent response to this injury, as well as a realistic reflection of the change in one's socioeconomic environment.

> (How would you divide these 9 years into stages?) I would say that the beginning period, when you simply are trying to stop here, you are trying to settle somewhere, to figure out the direction you are going to and little by little you get *experience*, I mean, [ ] you find your place somehow, you work in your profession and stand on your feet somehow. When you feel that you stand on your feet, let's say, I had my initial period when I was getting on my feet, then when I finally felt that I was OK, that you are settled and for a period of time you are getting stronger, then I looked at what's next. [ ] I mean, when I decided to go for an MBA, let's say, to go back to school in order to open another *avenue* which is more interesting, to *fulfill* yourself more and do, to [reach] something bigger. My

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> two years of MBA studies, really, transformed, not just me, but other people I talked to, a new world opened up, new *opportunities*, new opportunities. [ ] After that you are at a new level, when you lift up, from the bottom of society you lift up to almost, I mean, when you interacted with and saw the rich and famous, like Warren Buffet or legends like him. (pp. 33-34)

It is significant that Andrei's description of stages of his adaptation process is focused on his career development. In contrast to Masha, whose stages were related to family transitions, Andrei places his career as a priority in his life. However, there is a certain similarity between the two descriptions. It refers to the gradual process of adjusting after a significant upheaval and change, developing a sense of comfort, and then moving on. Mark also spoke about reaching a plateau after the initial accelerated learning. Once again, while there are similarities in ways the participants reconstruct the process of adaptation, there are many differences. These differences are in part related to each person's identity and life circumstances.

### Immigration experience: here I am

Theme 5: I did not lose anything, but only gained. In order to succeed, you cannot look back.

One of the most striking aspects of my interviews with Andrei was his insistence on not experiencing loss. His attempts to convince me that this was the case only persuaded me further that this was a defense.

> I never thought that I lost something, I thought that I found something, that I came here to find something. I didn't come here to lose something and to get something instead, to compensate for the loss. I mean my head, my thoughts would not turn that way. I mean I gave credit that, yes, I got my education there, grew up, all of this, of course, left a certain imprint on me and gave me, of course... I mean I did not want to *undermine* and I am not going to *undermine* anything that was there, but when I looked into the future, I mean what's there and what I can accomplish or what, I mean especially after what started there, all the mess, when I left, I didn't think I was losing anything at all (p. 26).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Andrei acknowledges that growing up in the former USSR left an imprint on him. Yet, he cannot imagine that one can both look ahead and miss things from the past. It seems that in his experience, feelings of loss or nostalgia are too troublesome to have. When asked about the impact of his father's death, Andrei spoke only of becoming more responsible and being angry at the doctors. While Anna also spoke about being more responsible and mature because of her mother's illness and death, her description of this experience was more vivid and present. I would guess that the time of Andrei's father's death was a very difficulty moment in his life which he does not want to remember since, according to Andrei, looking back may inhibit his ability to move forward. The participants' experiences with losses before and after immigration not only reflect the way they cope with loss, but also impact their experience of immigration.

> I think I had something like that after 7th grade when I went to Czechoslovakia for 20 days to a camp. Then I had a sense that I am out of place, something is not mine. Maybe people call it nostalgia or not, but like something is not right, but after that I did not feel anything like that. I mean I went to London before I immigrated here, I didn't have, I felt at home. In general, when I came here, I had simply feeling that things are not familiar, something is different of course, but you have to learn and understand everything, but that feeling that it's not yours - I didn't have. (p. 22)

According to Andrei, this was the only time he felt homesick. It is clear that he did not like this feeling. I believe that Andrei learned to cope with feelings of sadness, loss, or ambivalence by denying them. As stated previously, psychoanalysts write about splitting between the new and the old as a common process among immigrants (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989). According to the psychoanalytic literature, one eventually has to integrate the two worlds. While Andrei integrates certain parts of his old life, such as his education and his culture, he also continues to keep many other parts out of his

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

mind.

> Immigration from Russia is a little different because people were practically running, I mean the term "refugee"[28] is about the fact that people were selling everything because they couldn't take anything with them. They were selling everything and running and knew that there is no way back, because they could no longer live there, because they would have no means to live there or even to get back. [ ] (How do you think it affects the way people adopt – the fact that everything was left there?) The fact that they know that there is no way back, there is no road back, not just the political but simple financial. So they know that there is no road back, like they say during the war (smiles) – "only forward." That's why they already *struggle*, they do everything possible to... (*have to survive?)* Yes.... [ ] Because people don't die from hunger here, but you work to become somebody, to be appreciated, to achieve something. You have some nostalgia, I don't know, but there are people who look back and think back, they don't achieve anything and won't achieve anything here. (If you look back, it can...) No, you should have looked before. You should have made the decision before. (So if you made the decision, you are already...) Especially where people are leaving and know that there is not road back, you make the decisions accordingly. Decision is made and then you deal with this decision that you made and with those circumstances that you have (pp. 30-31).

The inability of refugees and exiles to return to their native country can become an incentive and reason to assimilate quickly and split off the old world (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Andrei believes that this inability to go back helped him and others to focus on the future and survive. It seems that in his view, "looking back" is equivalent to "getting stuck in the past." Andrei's reluctance to go back to visit Belarus also speaks to his need to keep the old and the new separate. It reminded me of Boris' and Natasha's narratives, the two participants who also used splitting as a defense. I am not quite sure where this attitude comes from for Andrei. However, it is clearly his way of coping. Once again, he points out that once you make a decision, there is no room for mixed feelings or regrets. I wondered how Andrei would have approached the process of

[28] "Refugee" in Russian is "bezhenets," which literally means "the one who ran away."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigration if he could go back, if the situation in Belarus were better.[29] On one hand, it could have created more ambivalence and, therefore, more difficulty for Andrei. He needs to project the bad objects onto his Russian experience. On the other hand, he could have constructed another explanation.

Andrei was the only participant who had some difficulty answering the question about the impact of immigration experience on him as a person. He spoke about differences between the two countries, the uniqueness of his Russian experience, his career achievements, and being able to feel equal and free to work anywhere in the world. On one hand, like many participants, Andrei reflected on the positive impact of immigration which allowed for his self-actualization. On the other hand, there was an underlying message in Andrei's narrative that he himself did not change through the immigration experience. Similar to Boris who openly stated that he did not change, Andrei may be expressing his wish to remain the same in spite of the extensive change in his environment as a result of immigration. In the words of Erikson(1959), ego identity refers to a mutual relation between a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.

Theme 6: I choose the best of two worlds: Russian and American.

> (I am trying to understand what it means to assimilate – to be a part of this culture, to know the language, to know traditions, to belong to the society. Does it mean to feel as an American?) No, well, to assimilate, I mean, to be in this system, to understand it, so you are accepted, not like someone who was dragged out of, I don't know what ,and put into... Like someone who is respected and considered. [ ] To understand it, to accept the way it is and, of course, take what... I mean to *reflect* everything you consider necessary and useful, *reflect* it on yourself as a self improvement and *disregard* what you consider amoral or don't believe you need it

[29] The reality is that logistically Andrei can go back if he decides to. Although there are only a few known cases, it is not unprecedented for refugees to return. This belief appears to be more of a defense, rather than reality.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

(pp. 45-46).

> I know others who understand very well the pluses of what they take, but take the best from what is left, what they can take from Russian culture and all. And teach their children Russian, so they would know and would speak Russian and English. I mean they look at things objectively (p. 47).

Consistent with his description of different types of immigrants, Andrei talks about his choice of balancing the two worlds. As usual, he is being practical: he wants to take the best of the two worlds. It is interesting that the things he described as belonging to the Russian culture are more related to his family values, Jewish values. Andrei's wish to take the best of the two worlds is different from what Akhtar (1999) and others described as the ultimate integration, which includes an immigrant's internal world. There are many aspects of the two worlds that Andrei has not yet integrated at this point. Does this mean that he had not achieved the goal of optimal adaptation? For some theories that would be the case. From my point of view, Andrei's level of functioning and comfort with his life indicate that he has reached his own optimal adaptation. As I noted previously, Birman's (1994) multidimensional theory of acculturation appears more useful in this case. Whether one calls it a "behavioral integration" or some other term or construct, Andrei is able to have a life that makes sense to him. He has some American friends, he speaks fluent English, he is successful in his career, and he feels as an American. At the same time, he married a woman who has only Russian friends, bought an apartment in a Russian-dominated neighborhood, and speaks with a thick Russian accent. I believe that Andrei's wife "contains" the Russian aspects of his identity for him so he can avoid internal conflict about it. Although Akhtar (1999) writes about the emergence of a newly integrated identity, Andrei's and others' narratives do not reveal a significant change. Rather, there

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

are developmental shifts, in part related to the immigration process. Andrei successfully functions predominantly in the Kleinian paranoid-schizoid position using splitting to defend against anxieties.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Theme 7: Being Jewish means belonging to the best nation in the world.

Similar to many participants, Andrei's first realization of being Jewish is connected with prejudice, a sense of being different.

> (How did your parents react to these fights? What did they say?) Well, like it's not easy to be Jew, sort of like, people have *misperceptions, whatever*, meaning, lack of education. [ ] That in order to really succeed, the only instrument you have is your head, that you have to study. To achieve what others achieve you have to know twice as well, to take this position, to achieve this. Because if you are going to be equal to others, nothing will... I mean, you have to stand out, you have to be better than others in order to achieve something, in order to become equal, you have to be higher, above. (pp. 55-56)

In response to this prejudice and discrimination, one develops a strategy. Andrei's parents provided him with that strategy: an exaggerated sense of agency. One must overachieve, to be better than others, and continuously aspire to achieve more.

> (What does it mean to you to be *Jewish*?) Well, in general, to belong, I mean, to have a feeling of belonging to the most ancient nation where the origins actually began. Nation that has the most, I mean, culture, the most long history accordingly, from which many famous and great people come. Nation that is aspiring, I mean, to speak generally in a larger sense, the most educated nation (pause). I mean many talented people, simply educated are all from there. [ ] When you look at those with peises,[30] you just feel sorry for them, but nevertheless, the nation preserved its identity over the centuries thanks to these people, preserved its history, culture, language, traditions (p. 54).

Here again we see the importance of the interpersonal aspect of Jewish identity –

[30] "Peises" is a Russian word for one of the physical attributes of Hasidic Jews.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

belonging to a group of people. Andrei is clearly proud of being Jewish, yet his pride has a grandiose flavor. As noted previously, it is not an uncommon defense of a minority group to external pressure and prejudice. Moreover, Andrei's perspective on the Jewish nation is consistent with his overall identity. He identifies with the superior aspects of the Jewish nation. Such identification not only helps him to defend against feelings of inferiority and shame, but also reinforces his desire to succeed and do well.

On a different note, I would like to comment on Andrei's preferences for a synagogue. His preference for the conservative synagogue is consistent with his rational approach to life, as well as his desire to achieve balance. He was not the first participant to express this preference. I might speculate that for many Russian Jews, the Conservative movement offers a reasonable middle ground. As Andrei noted, many of them do not feel comfortable in the orthodox community due to its perceived rigidity. Having lived in the former Soviet Union where rules and external pressures are extremely rigid, Russian Jews are looking to make their own choices. At the same time, the Reformed movement for many appears to be too nontraditional. I also wonder whether this wish for a middle ground may be related to the process of trying to negotiate the two worlds involved in immigration.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Vlad.**
**"I want to achieve to show others my abilities."**

*Vlad is a slightly balding, stocky young man who volunteered to participate in my study after seeing a flier at his local YMCA. From our very first phone conversation Vlad asked me personal questions, challenged me, flirted with me, and joked around. He clearly tried to impress me, while at the same time acknowledged his weaknesses in a self-deprecating and humorous way. Vlad often took a circuitous route when answering interview questions, changed topics, and made many side comments. In particular, he changed the topic of the conversation when asked emotionally difficult questions. At the same time, Vlad always tried to provide historical and contextual background to his stories. During our first interview, Vlad assumed that my husband was also of Russian background. However, after I called him to set up the second interview and my husband's name came up on his Caller ID, Vlad became somewhat more self-conscious and serious during the second and third interviews. Several times he made comments about the differences between my husband and himself. During the breaks in the interviews, Vlad spoke about his ambitions and a wish to achieve so his children could be proud of him. He also stated that he was proud to be a Russian, that he does not need to worry about his accent, and that it was nice to have so many Russian-speaking people around New York City. It is of interest that Vlad's cell phone rings with the anthem of the former USSR. He spoke mostly Russian with many colloquialisms and occasionally used English words.*

Vlad is a 31 year-old married man who lives with his wife in New York. He bought a house and was married three years ago. Vlad's wife is seven years his junior and has recently graduated college. He described her as supportive, undemanding, and willing to compromise. He stated that he felt fortunate to have met her because she is the perfect wife for him. Vlad has a degree in engineering from Belarus and an MBA in insurance finance through a distance-learning program. He works for an international division of a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

large insurance company. His job involves analyzing the financial effectiveness of the company's overseas subsidiaries. Vlad began with this company at the entry level of selling policies, was promoted to supervisor, and actively pursued his current position. He spent little time talking about his job during the interviews.

In his free time Vlad enjoys getting together with his friends, watching television, traveling, and reading Russian mystery books. He described his obsession with buying quality items, such as stereo equipment, clothes, or high-tech gadgets. At the same time, Vlad stated that he does not receive as much pure joy from these purchases as he did while living in Belarus. His parents and younger brother live in the same borough of New York. Vlad visits them almost weekly and talks to them frequently. He stated that at this point in their lives in the US his parents mostly need his emotional, rather than financial support.

### My immigration journey: from there to here

Vlad immigrated to the United States as a refugee at age 21 with his family from a large city in Belarus 10 years ago. He stated that while he always loved his city and his homeland, he hated "Sovok,[31]" i.e. the Soviet political system and the government attitudes toward people. Although he did not recall experiencing much daily anti-Semitism, Vlad emphasized the negative impact of institutional anti-Semitism on his and his parents' lives. For example, he told me about his father being fired from a job because he was a Jew and his own inability to pursue a career in humanities. As economy and political tensions in the USSR worsened, Vlad felt that he would not have had any

[31] "Sovok" is a derogatory term for the Soviet Union.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

opportunities there. He pushed his parents to consider immigrating. After serving in the Soviet army, Vlad began preparing for immigrating while he continued his studies at the local university. During that time, many of their friends and relatives were also immigrating either to Israel or to the US. This wave of global departure, as well as the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, served as incentives for Vlad's parents to immigrate.

During the years before immigrating, Vlad started dating and fell in love with a younger woman whom he had known since 8th grade. She was in love with him for many years, but Vlad dated only women his age, to show off in front of his friends. However, after coming back from the army, he began to notice her. About one year before Vlad's departure, his girlfriend immigrated to Israel. This was a very difficult moment for him. While Vlad actually proposed to her and was hoping to move with her, her mother did not allow the marriage immediately. She stated that he should follow them to Israel and get married there. At first, Vlad considered this option, in spite of his desire to immigrate to the US. The day he received an Israeli visa, his family received an invitation for an immigration interview at the US embassy. He wrote letters to his girlfriend asking her to consider moving to the US with him, but did not get a response. Vlad stated that he was upset about the situation and too proud to pursue it further. He was also angry at his girlfriend's mother and resentful of her controlling attitude. In the end, Vlad decided to move to the US and then to attempt to reconnect with his girlfriend. He acknowledged that the loss of his love was both the first and more significant loss, while immigration was the second.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

On the day of his departure, Vlad remembered his feelings of exhaustion, chaos, and many tears of their relatives and others who were saying goodbye. He knew that he may have been saying goodbye to his friends forever. He knew that he would not be able to call them tomorrow and go out for a cup of coffee. When I asked Vlad to identify his feelings at the time, he became defensive, stating that things are never black and white. After I clarified that I want to hear what it was like for him, he was able to describe his feelings. While Vlad felt sad about leaving, he also felt excited and hopeful. He compared his own success to the lives of his friends who immigrated to Israel and stated that he made the right choice.

Upon arriving in the US, Vlad remembers feeling disappointment and unimpressed with America. He stated that he felt lost and confused. Vlad emphasized that this feeling of confusion was not because of immigration, but rather because of the separation from his girlfriend. He felt nostalgic about her and could not forget about her. Vlad worked many menial jobs and spent some time on welfare. When the welfare office questioned four hundred dollars he made, Vlad became angry and declined welfare. He felt liked a low-class citizen who did not have a good car or money to spend. Vlad stated that during those initial months he was not seen as a person, but rather judged by the car he drove or the amount of money he made. When a newly arrived young immigrant woman expressed an interest in him, Vlad started dating her and soon moved in with her. He now believes that it was a hasty decision precipitated by the above mentioned feelings of confusion. Vlad described this relationship as conflictual and dysfunctional. He remembers feeling depressed, having no interest in pleasurable activities, and not enjoying food.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Vlad continued to think about his girlfriend in Israel and four years after his immigration went there to find out what he really wanted. During the years that they did not see each other, his girlfriend had married, had a child, and divorced. While in Israel Vlad learned that she did not receive any letters from him because her mother intercepted them. While he was still not sure whether he wanted to pursue this relationship, one thing he knew for sure upon his return to the States was that he wanted to break up with the woman he was living with. Vlad began talking with her about breaking up and eventually left her. Soon after that he was introduced to his future wife on a blind date. During that time, he was already planning another trip to Israel. Vlad described that trip as the "test shot in the head." He explained that he needed to visit his first love again to assure that his fantasies of getting back together were not real. He stated that he felt good about making that trip because he did not have to regret that he did not try. Vlad remembers feeling painfully aware of missing his future wife while flying to Israel. When he came back to the US, he continued to date his future wife and proposed about a year later.

Throughout the interviews, Vlad expressed his anger and resentment at his extended family. He described competition among newly arrived relatives for the resources and support of those who lived here longer. For example, only several years after their immigration did Vlad and his family learn that, during the preparations for immigrating, his uncle in the US sent a letter to another uncle stating that whoever comes to America first would get a better apartment. Vlad gave other examples of his extended family members cheating his parents or calling them ungrateful. He typically tells them how he feels without holding back. Vlad also felt that he received terrible advice about his education and career. Vlad's relatives suggested he attend City College to receive another

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bachelor's degree in engineering. Now he realizes that he could have applied for a Master's degree or could have gone to a computer school to develop a more profitable and reliable career. Instead, Vlad struggled in college, changing majors until he realized that he was wasting his time.

After leaving college Vlad had several jobs, including painting bath tubs, investigating people who apply for subsidized housing, and signing people up for health insurance. Making more money, Vlad felt that he was back on his feet. Through his last job he made a connection with a Jew who worked for a local hospital, who helped him to get a job there. During that time, Vlad's brother had a mentor through the Jewish community who helped him get internships and a job at an insurance company. Through his brother, Vlad continuously submitted his vitae and eventually got a job with the company where he currently works. It was while at this company that he decided to get an MBA. Because he did not feel that he could afford going to school full-time, Vlad investigated distance-learning programs and decided to take that route. He enjoyed the flexibility of the program and its applied focus.

When asked to identify different periods of his adaptation to the US, Vlad first compared it to being a student in college. First, you are simply an applicant. Then you become a freshman who does not know anything. Eventually, you move on and become a senior, someone with experience and power. Similarly, during the first stage of his immigration experience, he felt as "loparik," i.e. a simpleton, someone who does not know the environment, feels stupid and inferior. During the next stage, an immigrant knows how things are, but continues to feel uncomfortable and afraid of the future. The final stage of living out one's days is about feeling comfortable, stable, and continuing to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

develop. Vlad also compared the adaptation process to the transition from college to the workforce. When a person gets the first job, he or she feels insecure and worried about being fired. After changing a job a couple of times, a person feels more comfortable about his or her ability to get another job. Then a person begins to look for a better job, with better pay or opportunities. In terms of things that helped Vlad during his adaptation process, he spoke about his persistence. He stated that it is very important not to give up. Vlad continuously studied English, tried to interact with Americans, and pursued a better life for himself.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

When asked to free-associate about his immigration experience, Vlad's first response was that he hopes to never do it again. He spoke about the impact of immigrating at age 20, when he had already passed through childhood, yet was only at the beginning of his adult life and career. He did not know what he wanted to do or what he wanted to be. Vlad spoke about leaving his future and his friends and starting over. On one hand, immigrating at this age meant losing his foundation. On the other hand, he was able to learn English faster and was more flexible in adjusting to the new country than were his parents.

Vlad compared immigrating to breaking one's bones. He stated that if someone broke a bone and it did not heal right, they would have to break it again. It is a painful but necessary experience that a person consciously decides to go through in order to get better. Vlad spoke about immigration as the break in the familiar. He also stated that his ambitions and achievement-strivings helped him to adjust better. In terms of the personal

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

impact of his immigration, Vlad spoke about becoming more independent, more responsible, and willing to try things. He commented that if he had stayed in Belarus, he would have received a lot of help from his parents, including getting jobs and promotions. In the US Vlad had to rely on himself. He stated that the things he worked hard for are most valuable to him. In general, Vlad stated that he is not an immigrant anymore, that he just lives a normal life.

Several times during the interviews, Vlad spoke about his resentment of the attitudes of Americans towards immigrants. He believes that Americans think immigrants are idiots, they make assumptions about them, and treat them like children. However, he acknowledged that over time he realized that there are certain types of people who are more likely to behave that way, who will not understand your English no matter how good it is. Vlad remembered how at first he could not understand why so many companies hire immigrants. He stated that he realized that European immigrants are smarter, more educated, and more cultured than Americans. At the same time, Vlad does not respect those Russian immigrants who remain in the Brighton Beach area and do not try to integrate into American life.

Vlad stated that he loves America and considers it to be his homeland now. He feels that he got used to the reality of his life here and became Americanized. He is proud to live in America, he is a fan of American sports teams, and he wants America to be number one. Vlad emphasized the difference between the US and the former USSR in the way they treat people. As an example, he focused on the two recent events: an American plane that made an emergency landing in China and the Russian submarine, *Kursk*, that sank. The Russian government did not request help from other countries, fearing the loss

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of military secrets and, as a result, all personnel died. In contrast, the American government made sure that the plane crew got home safely. Vlad acknowledged that not everything is perfect in America. He stated that one can both love a country and criticize it.

Vlad spoke at length about his love for Russian food, music, and culture because it belongs to him. He never wants to lose his Russian background. Moreover, Vlad stated that having a Russian background only gives him more choices. He loves to watch Russian television programs and hang out with his friends in Russian cafes. Vlad enjoys living in a mixed neighborhood of middle class Americans and Russians. In terms of language, he is most comfortable speaking a mixture of English and Russian. Vlad stated that there are things in both languages that cannot be translated. He speaks mostly Russian at home and English at work. He and his brother would also switch to English if they do not want their parents to understand them. Vlad has not visited Belarus and has little interest in going there. He stated that his friends there are too busy surviving and would not be able to spend much time with him. Vlad would consider, however, going there on business. For example, he thought of going to his company's office in Ukraine and taking his wife with him to visit her native city.

### Jewishness: then and now

One of the first comments Vlad made about his Jewishness was a joke that it was not his worst quality. He first realized he was Jewish through his family environment. Vlad remembers celebrating holidays, his parents hiding pork from his grandparents, and everyone speaking Yiddish. He told a funny story about starting day care. Although he

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was toilet trained by that time, suddenly his teachers were complaining about him not going on the toilet. Only after Vlad's father spoke to the teachers did they realize that he would ask to go to the toilet in Yiddish, which no one understood. Vlad stated that he simply felt that he had Jewishness in him. He also asked his parents questions about traditions and customs. Vlad commented that his family insisted on the importance of education. He remembered that he had been told to study hard in order to get ahead and be an equal to others. Vlad also remembers that he was told about the importance of marrying a Jew.

Vlad remembers his father fighting anti-Semitism in his own way. For example, he went to Vlad's school and demanded that his son not learn the Belorussian language. He told the teachers that his son would start learning it when they would also teach Yiddish. Vlad himself would always fight other children who made nasty comments about Jews. As noted above, he mostly resented the institutional or government anti-Semitism. He felt that it was humiliating that Jews could not attend the schools they wanted.

However, Vlad also commented that being a Jew provided him with an opportunity to immigrate and do well. He told a story about a teacher in his school who told him that he should "decline" his last name. When a relative visiting from the US heard about this story, he said that Vlad should immigrate to the United States where no one would "decline" his name. Vlad stated that only later on did he understand the meaning of that comment. He believes that in the US nobody can change his sense of belonging to the Jewish nation, that he can be whatever he wants to be.

Vlad joked that being born Jewish means being traumatized for life. On a more serious note he stated that being Jewish means being proud of his nation, a sense of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

belonging to the chosen people, his identification with the survival of the Jewish people, and simply a way of life. Vlad considers himself a patriot of Israel and feels at home when he is there. While he never considered himself religious and had struggled to explain to Americans his personal meaning of being Jewish, Vlad stated that immigrating to America allowed him to learn about Judaism. He now believes that being Jewish includes both religion and nationality. Vlad attends synagogue several times a year for special occasions. While he wants his future children to attend a yeshiva to receive a better education, he does not want them to be Hasidic. Vlad, however, stated that he would give them a choice.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF VLAD: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: I can be harsh and aggressive if people put me down. I want to achieve to show others my abilities.

> My brother is a very social person. Everyone *love(s)* him – everyone loves him, you know. If I elicit this feeling, negative feeling in people, sometimes... Not that it's negative. How can I put it. We are very different. He can let things go. I mean, I know that he did not miss it. It's just he ignores it, turns around and leaves. He won't pay attention to it. He just ignores it. And people think that he is so *polite*, you know. I mean it's a plus for him, it's absolutely not a minus. So in that sense, I can talk back. If someone says something to me that I don't like, not that I am so aggressive, but when they push me, I don't stay silent. (p. 33-34)

> I guess I have big ambitions. Maybe even bigger than what I am, you know. But for some reason I... I love when, you know, my relatives say, "Oh, he is such..., you know..." Or when you get a *promotion*, it's like... *happy*, you know. There is this wicked little person inside of me, a person who wants to boast, to show how I am cool and with a trademark, you know (smiles). (p. 25)

Vlad's level of resentment and anger at his relatives expressed throughout the interviews was palpable. In addition, his anger came across in the story about the welfare, his descriptions of the attitudes of Americans towards immigrants, and in the story about his ex-girlfriend. I myself experienced Vlad's aggression, although in a subtler, more challenging, form. It usually emerged when he felt threatened by my questions. I will address below the relationship between Vlad's anger and the immigration process. His own thoughts on his feisty personality reflect a more stable character trait. I believe that there is a connection between the two quotes above. Vlad's anger and aggression are a defensive reaction to feelings of humiliation when he is denigrated. His achievement strivings are also in part a defense against similar feelings. As he compared himself to his brother, and later, to his parents, I wondered about his role in the family. Is he the one who holds the anger, who defends everyone, and who expresses negative emotions?

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**My immigration journey: from there to here**

Theme 2: Decision to immigrate: I pushed my parents to leave. I had mixed feeling about leaving.

> I wanted to leave. I was leaving... not that I was going blindly, that my parents took me by the scruff of my neck. I probably was a big push. I did not like Sovok. Sovok, not like it is my homeland. It's beautiful, I really loved the city, loved it very much. I loved to take walks. But I really, I don't know, it's not like a revolutionary spirit, but from my childhood I really didn't like all these oktyabryata-shmoktyabryata, pionery,[32] you see. [ ] So, everything like that, that people were oppressed, that a person cannot immigrate. [ ] And that people are treated like animals. You see, so. Plus with age I was realizing that... how can I tell you... I didn't really experience anti-Semitism. I was never told that I was a kike muzzle, well they said that when I was little, but it wasn't something memorable because I could give them a black eye, I could simply .. [ ] I was really more irritated by the *government* attitude, you know. (p. 20-21)

Similar to many other participants, such as Boris, Regina, Natasha, Lena and Andrei, Vlad sees himself as an active participant in the decision-making process involved in immigration, "not going blindly." As I noted previously, due to the study's retrospective nature it is difficult to determine whether this is an accurate reflection of his thoughts and behavior then, or is the way in which Vlad reconstructs his narrative, or both. However, it is clear that having a sense of agency in this process is important for his subsequent adaptation. Other examples of Vlad's sense of agency were his active pursuit of the kind of job he wanted, getting an MBA, or rejecting a problematic relationship.

According to Vlad, his major reason for immigrating was his dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime, including political brainwashing and institutional anti-Semitism. Later on he spoke about the deteriorating economic and political situation as additional reasons

---

[32] In addition to Komsomol, "Oktyabryata and Pionery" are the other two youth Communist organizations. You become an octyabryonok (from October - the month of the October revolution of 1917) in the first grade. You become a pioneer in the third grade.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for leaving. Vlad also wanted a better future for himself. In addition, similar to other participants, his decision was affected by the fact that the rest of his community was leaving. In the above quote, Vlad is able to separate the negatives from the positives, pointing out the things he loved about the country. According to Akhtar (1999), an immigrant is vulnerable to splitting off self and object representations. An exile may need to split off and project all negative affects onto the native country in order to cope with the guilt of leaving his or her country. It is not clear whether this is the case for Vlad at this point. It is possible that at the time of his departure Vlad used splitting but was eventually able to move "from hate or love to ambivalence" (Akhtar, 1999). Such a process would indicate a move from the paranoid-schizoid to depressive position in his feelings about Russia.

> I don't know, I always had this feeling from early on that sometimes you are saying good bye for a short time, but you are really parting forever. I mean I was ready for it. I mean... It's just friends, you know. I knew that it will be all new there. And tomorrow I won't be able to call my friend and say, "Let's go out for coffee" or something like that. You know, that's how it was. Maybe a sense of the unknown to some extent. And that, you know, I did not know when we'll see each other. [ ] On one hand, some hope, some joy. On the other hand, *sad* of course, very *sad*. I had many friends who already left, went to Israel. That's why I made my choice, I am not going to join them. On the other hand, when I later on came over after 5-6 years, traveled in Israel and looked around, I realized that, I think, my *choice* wasn't that bad, you know, in comparison to what it could have been. (pp. 24-25)

It is unclear whether Vlad's sense of being "prepared" for the possibility of parting forever with his friends is a retrospective attempt to make sense of his experience. He may have been trying to protect himself from the loss by being "prepared." He had seen the previous wave of immigration and experienced perceived permanent loss of people he knew. Similar to Boris, Regina, and Olga, Vlad experienced mixed feelings about

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigrating. He was worried about the unknown, felt sad, and yet, excited. As noted previously, it is mostly men described in this study who appear to focus on the "unknown." It is significant that Vlad uses English to talk about sadness and immediately switches to compare himself to his friends in justifying his choice. I believe that this is a typical example of Vlad's way of defending against negative emotions, i.e., distancing and self-congratulating. Like Andrei, he continues to point out that he made the right choice. We can only wonder about his struggle during the actual decision-making process.

Theme 3: Initial period: I felt confused and inferior to others

> I guess I was lost. You know, I kind of... Not that I was lost in terms of what I will do, or how I will live. No, it was more like, I don't know, maybe in terms of my personal life, you know. I mean, I did not know where I was and stuff. Not that I was struggling with immigration and I was nostalgic. No, I didn't have that. But there was this feeling, my feeling, you know. I probably just could not forget that girl. (p. 8)

On one hand, I believe Vlad that he was still mourning the loss of his girlfriend when he immigrated. On the other hand, his denial of nostalgic feelings about his native land only convinced me that those feelings existed. They were simply overwhelmed by the feelings attached to the loss of the relationship. As noted previously, one's country presents an actual and an internalized object which can be mourned in the same way one mourns the separation or the loss of a person. However, when the two coincide, one would experience significantly more distress losing an actual relationship. While for Mark the immigration process and issues of loss became intermingled with the loss of his wife through the divorce, Vlad's first and more significant loss was the separation from his girlfriend. In both cases the separations were externally motivated. I believe that Vlad's

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

feelings of confusion and loss were related both to the loss of his girlfriend and to the loss of his country.

> In those circumstances I met a girl who, you know, seem to look at me as a person. You know, in those years you look... It would seem that people should look at me because I am handsome, right? Or good, kind, caring... But nobody looked. It was more like, "Ah, you have 1980 *Chevy Malibu*. Ah, we don't ride in a car for three hundred dollars." And she noticed me. (p. 7)

> You were looked down upon. You were talked to as if... you know, as if... And they start to explain to you as a child, sort of like "one plus one is two." [ ] It is as if you are dumb because you have (an accent?) you don't speak correctly, you can't, you make grammatical mistakes, but if you don't speak English correctly, it automatically means that you are put in the category of morons. (p. 47)

Vlad is more explicit about his feelings of inferiority during the initial period than Andrei. Moving across the world means more than simply changing countries. You are suddenly not seen for who you are, but rather based on your deficiencies. There is a mismatch between Vlad's inner view of himself and the other's perceptions of him. In the two quotes above I see the two ways Vlad was trying to cope with his feeling of inferiority. First, he became involved with someone simply because she was interested in him. There is a need for connection and recognition. Second, he became angry and resentful at those who misperceived him. In contrast, Natasha, who was embarrassed by her accent and being different, tried to fit in.

> For a person who is twenty years-old, you know, it's the best energy. A person needs to learn, study, know. He is interested in everything, he wants to afford everything. And you arrive, you don't have a penny in your pocket, you can't afford anything. You know, everyone tries to... There is a great danger, by the way, for people to become depressed. Because I knew people who were very lost. Just because you have no friends. You can't invite your old ones over, and you can't afford to go anywhere yourself. You know... You have no job, no... You know, nothing. You don't know anyone. Your relatives only talk to you, they only start interacting with you, those who have been here the longest, when you have a car and money to pay for yourself in the restaurant. I mean all that really depresses me. (p. 58)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Like many other participants, Vlad speaks about loneliness and depression. The intensity of his feelings and the use of the present tense in the last sentence indicate that he recalls that time vividly and continues to have feelings of anger and resentment. Vlad also speaks to his developmental stage at the departure time and its impact on his adjustment. As he commented at a different point, for him it was a time between childhood and early adulthood. It meant having some roots, yet not being established yet. Vlad was able to reflect on both the positive and negative aspects of being in his early 20s on his adjustment process.

Theme 4: It was a gradual process of learning and becoming more comfortable in the US.

> Simply from the period of adaptation to the period of formation, and then to the period of living out one's days, let's say. (laughing) (What do you mean?) Well, adaptation is when you just arrive and look around, get used to things, understand everything, you know. It goes on for the first several years. Then there is the period of formation, when you approximately figured out what's what, but you still don't, well you don't feel comfortable in a sense that, you know... You still have this anxiety, you know, this sense of fear about what is ahead. [ ] And then you get to the third stage – the stage of living out one's days. I mean, you already feel quite comfortable, I mean, you have a career. What is involved in the stage of living out one's days? I believe that it's simply earning money, developing, if possible to get more money, you get more, you go to a place where you can get more money. I mean it's no longer development, well maybe it is some kind of development, but development at the level of stability. I mean, it's adding to who you already are. (p. 45)

Once again, the adaptation process is described as gradual and related to the re-establishment of stability. While different participants use different labels to name the stages of this process, there are a number of similarities. I will provide an overview of these descriptions in Chapter 4. For Vlad, the process involved an initial period of confusion and learning about a new environment, the re-establishment of financial stability, and a gradual process of re-focusing on the normal developmental tasks of career

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

development and self-improvement. As he commented later on, Vlad does not feel as an immigrant anymore.

In addition to acquiring knowledge about American life and re-establishing stability, Vlad was also engaged in the process of letting go of his fantasy of reconnecting with his first love as it was before he immigrated. It was not an easy process, as he needed two trips to Israel to make sure that he was ready to move on. I believe that many immigrants, like Masha or Anna, have similar fantasies of going back to their native land. Whether one is able to let go of this fantasy indicates their ability to move on in their new lives.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

Theme 5: The hardships of immigration process only made me more independent. I want to achieve more.

> (What do you think the *sadness* was about?) More about my friends. About that you break the usual... It's always difficult to break something and change. For example, when a person breaks his leg or arm and the bone grows back together in a wrong way, you have no choice but break it again and to grow it back together again. So it is the same way here. You are going consciously for a break, so it would get better, but of course it hurts a lot. Right? Because you know it's going to hurt a lot but at the same time you know that you will be running, jumping and celebrating later. You can dance again. It's the same here. (So it is a sense of some necessary...) Yes, most probably it is a necessity. It was like - that's it, we must. The circumstances were such that there was no other way. (p. 25)

Similar to Anna's metaphor of immigrating as a deep cut, Vlad is also speaking about the emotional pain which is equivalent to the pain associated with a physical injury. He speaks about his awareness and expectation of his pain prior to immigration. I believe he talks about the "break" of relationships: relationships with people, with environment, with the familiar. The difference, however, between Anna's and Vlad's experiences is in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their sense of agency. While Anna's experience is more passive, Vlad made his own choice to "break the bone in order to heal." Although his metaphor is somewhat confusing (i.e., what was broken before?), the hope of complete healing is quite clear. In contrast, Anna believes that the pain due to cutting ligaments will stay with her forever.

> I never relied on others, I relied more on myself. (But at the beginning...) At the beginning... I am just telling you about my first impressions, when, you know, you see that everyone wants to cheat you, want to cheat you, you know. And maybe it's good. For me, I don't know, it pushed me to achieve something, you know. It was an incentive. To show everyone that I am not a piece of shit. (p. 27)

> I guess I became probably more responsible. [ ] When I came here, I had to do it myself, you know. Most of us do it. I mean people who are earning money, who are studying, who are striving for more. Like you, like my friends. [ ] (You had this confidence in your abilities that if you want something, you can put an effort into it.) I can try! I can't say that I can do it. I can't say that I will do it and I will have it. I can say that I will try. (pp. 67-68)

In spite of his continued anger and resentment about the past, Vlad believes that his immigration experience had a positive impact on his identity. The experiences of efficacy due to his own, not his parents', efforts helped Vlad to feel more independent and confident. Moving to the United States provide him with an opportunity to accomplish things on his own. Once again, the anger and his wish to achieve are connected. Consistent with his general approach to life, Vlad negotiates the difficulties of the immigration process by "getting angry and getting even." As I noted before, the sense of agency is very important in this process. After the latter quote Vlad told a joke about a guy who prays to God to win a lottery. After about five years God finally becomes frustrated and says to the guy, "Could you at least buy a ticket?!"

<u>Theme 6: I resent my extended family who did not provide adequate support for us.</u>

> I remember we lived with my uncle. Then I remember that his wife kicked us out in a month. [ ] I remember that as soon as we arrived and received the first subsidy

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> from NYANA, my uncle took it right away. Because he borrowed money for visas and the entry. So he took it right away. [ ] I mean that's why I am with all my relatives... Like that. (Resentment?) It's not resentment. It's just... As the call, so is the echo. You see, it was the time when... When we first arrive to a new country, we don't have anything, right? I mean I can't say that they did these things on purpose, to push us into the wrong direction or something like that. But I am simply saying that it could have been done in a different way. (pp. 25-26)

On the social and family level, immigration can certainly lead to a competition for limited resources and deterioration of the pre-existing family relations and worsening dysfunction. However, the fact that so many years later Vlad continues to feel resentful speaks to his own struggle. As Akhtar (1999) points out, in order for an immigrant to achieve the optimal distance and ambivalence on the dimensions of identity transformation, he needs to have the predominance of loving and positive feelings and experiences in his life. On one hand, Vlad has good and positive relationships with his wife, his immediate family and his friends. On the other hand, he is full of anger and rage. Considering his comment about not having feelings of "pure joy" when he buys things, I wondered whether Vlad continues to experience residual levels of depression. It is possible that, while Lena simply acknowledged her inability to experience spontaneous joy, Vlad's depression is expressed through anger. I believe that this level of anger has a negative impact on his ability to integrate his positive and negative feelings about Americans.

<u>Theme 7: I have mixed feelings about America and Americans. I don't want to lose my Russian background.</u>

> I am more Americanized. I mean my homeland is here now. I worry about Americans, I want America to be *number one*. And better, and more beautiful. And forget Rushka[33]. I am not as interested in it. (p. 72)

---

[33] "Rushka" is a frequently used among immigrant term for Russia. It is a combination of English "Russia" and a Russian ending which has a diminutive meaning.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Well, from the very beginning, you see, we were not interacting with Americans at the level, how can I say it, not like you are interacting, but at the level that he is an American and I am an immigrant. I mean, praise the people who were able to get rid of this feeling. You see, when you begin to feel that you are above Americans. Smarter, more handsome, more dressed up. We did not have it then. When you can tell an American that, like, he can stop boasting his habits and all, that there is nothing good in it, that all Americans are also immigrants but only on a degraded level. Only then you start feeling here as a person. (p. 46)

I could speculate about a couple of reasons for the above contrast in Vlad's love for America and denigration of Americans. First, I must wonder about the sincerity of the first comment. As I noted previously, Vlad became more cautious with me after learning that my husband is an American. It is possible that he was trying to repair some of his previous negative comments about Americans. Second, there is a conceptual difference between a relationship with America and a relationship with Americans. Having left Belarus as a refugee and having made a commitment to the US, Vlad has a new allegiance. This reflects a mature form of the paranoid-schizoid position which helps him to be a part of American society. He has his family and friends here, he started his own family here, and plans to have his children here. However, in order to develop relationships with individual Americans, Vlad needs to feel equal to them.

Vlad's last quote reflects the use of grandiosity as a narcissistic defense against his feelings of inferiority. Similar to Andrei, he needs to feel superior. It is as if someone always has to be on top.

> I experienced changes. What kind of changes? You are adapting, a different country, you begin to experience things differently. Even with American humor: how difficult it was at first to understand American jokes. And now we have a double advantage: we understand our jokes and their jokes, you see. So, that means we can laugh twice as much than they could. (laughing) Or those who now live in Russia. Because they can't understand what we can. It's sort of an addition. We should not lose what we have, if we can and we can't refuse what

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> we can acquire. So, we end up in a winning position. [ ] We have more choices. (pp. 64-65)

As we can see, Vlad oscillates from the earlier dismissal of his native land ("forget Rushka") to the latter acknowledgment of his need to preserve his Russian roots ("we should not lose what we have"). Vlad describes a process of acquiring the new culture ("understanding American jokes") and preserving the old culture. Considering his continued internal conflicts about Americans, according to Birman's model of acculturation (1994), Vlad could be seen as someone who is integrated behaviorally and linguistically, but not integrated in his identity dimension. From the Kleinian perspective, Vlad can be seen as both oscillating between paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions and having some level of the integration of the two in specific aspects of his relationships to American and Russian cultures.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Theme 8: Nobody can take away my sense of belonging to the Jewish people.

> (The story about "declining" his name) He meant belonging. [ ] He meant my last name in a sense of nationality. [ ] In general, I would not explain it to Americans now. Because Americans perceive that a Jew in Russia is also religion. Maybe it is now, but before Jewish in Russia was a nationality, it's different. But they can't understand it, you see. [ ] (What does it mean to be a Jew?) Nothing. Pride. I am proud. I, by the way, am very *happy*. To some extent I am a nationalist. [ ] We are God's chosen people. I am not a chauvinist in a sense that everything has to be for Jews. No, I simply believe that [ ] if for so many centuries they could not eliminate, could not break this small group of people, then it's very important. [ ] Because the same Jews always believed that our children simply have to be more educated than others in order to stand at the same level with those who are the majority. (pp. 76-77)

As with many other participants, being Jewish has multiple meanings. For Vlad, it is about belonging to a nation, survival, and being a minority. He identifies with the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jewish nation, its struggles and victories because of his own experiences. During his years in the former Soviet Union, Vlad "survived" the anti-Semitism by fighting, trying to gain an education, and bonding with his community. This approach is consistent with his general tendency to fight and feel superior when humiliated. In contrast, Natasha emphasized her need to fit in and not to stand out.

Having immigrated to the US, Vlad has to deal with the confusion between the two countries in the ways Jewishness is defined. Although he is resistant to explain his views regarding Jewishness to Americans, he is willing to learn about Judaism and change his views.

> Before I thought it was just nationality. But now – it's not just religion. It's everything together. It's convictions, it's views of life, it's nationality, it's where you come from, where your relatives are, who your relatives are. It's everything together, you see. For us, it's a little bit more. [ ] For us it's probably a way of life, you know. Matza, Hava Nagilah, a little schnapps on Shabbas. For the happiness. (p. 83)

Consistent with research on Jewish identity (Horowitz, 2000; Kliger & Carnes, 2000; Markowitz, 1993; Ritterband, 1993), Vlad identifies multiple meanings of being Jewish. It is now a complex identity that includes nationality, religion, origin, and community. And mostly importantly, Vlad sees it as a way of life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Story of Alex.**
**"I am self sufficient. I am responsible for those close to me."**

*Alex is a man of medium height with a mustache and beard that makes him look European in an old fashioned kind of way. I originally contacted his wife to participate in the study. However, because she was not Jewish, she did not qualify for the study, at which point Alex hesitantly agreed to participate. When he signed the consent form, I realized that he had legally changed his first and last names to sound more American. Alex appeared somewhat tense and guarded during the first interview. While he was more relaxed during the second interview, Alex was tired and was short in his answers. He was very serious throughout the interviews with occasional expression of his dry and sarcastic sense of humor. Alex preferred to talk about his thinking, rather than emotional experiences. He spoke Russian during the interviews and used little English. When ordering food in the coffee shop where we met, Alex spoke fluent but accented English. At the end of the interviews, he wondered how the interviews affected me. Alex stated that he could never imagine listening to people's problems all the time.*

Alex is a 31 year-old married man who lives with his wife in Manhattan. They have known each other for two years and have been married for six months. Alex runs a multi-level marketing business, working with his mother. The business was started by his parents several years ago. While Alex always helped his parents in running the business, he took charge after his father's death two years ago. He stated that he was surprised to discover that he did not become bored with this work, as he had with many others jobs in the past. Alex enjoys the organizational and leadership aspects of this job. In terms of formal education, he has a degree in programming from Russia and a JD degree from a prestigious law school in New York. After graduating from law school, Alex received an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

additional specialization in tax law. He also received additional training in business, an LLM certificate.

In his free time Alex enjoys taking car trips with his wife, watching television, and reading. He has a couple of close Russian friends, but mostly prefers to spend time alone or with his wife. Alex emphasized that he loves both the apartment and the neighborhood he lives in because they feel like home. He stated that he has achieved everything he wanted to achieve up until this point and is quite satisfied with his life. His next goal is to make more money and have children.

### My immigration journey: from there to here

Alex immigrated to the United States on his own as a refugee at age 21 from a large city in Russia 11 years ago. His parents always wanted, but were unable, to immigrate and received the status of "refuseniks" in the late 1970s when Alex was about 10 years old. He stated that he learned about their plans to immigrate and about being Jewish at around the same time. Alex stated that it was mostly his mother who wanted to leave and who convinced his father. She was a talented scientist but was unable to advance her career because she was Jewish. Alex always hated life in the Former Soviet Union and wanted to immigrate. In particular, he resented the fact that he could not study law or philosophy as he wanted. When he was 18, his parents told him that they were too old and settled to initiate immigration again, but that they would go with him if he decided to go. Alex began the process of applying for immigration. He started attending his local synagogue and participating in youth activities in preparation for departure. Alex stated that he engaged in these activities because the synagogue provided him with a community

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and source of information, as well as an opportunity to learn about Jewishness.

Alex left the country on his own because the Soviet government initially did not allow his parents out due to their security clearance. They were both scientists who worked on secret projects in the past. His mother came to the US one year later and his father came two years later. Alex stated that it was better for him to immigrate on his own so he did not have to be responsible for anyone else. He stated that when he is having a hard time, he prefers to be alone, turn his face to the wall, and pull himself together. He does not like to put on a happy face for others. Alex has vague memories of the day of his departure. He only remembers his father waiving a white jacket at the airport. Alex did not know whether they would see each other again. When asked how this thought affected his immigration experience and him personally, Alex stated that the decision was made a long time ago and it was a given. He immigrated through Italy and stayed there for five months. While there, Alex lived with his girlfriend from Russia, whom he met through the Jewish community, who came to Italy soon after him. He loved Italy and enjoyed his time there.

Upon his arrival to the US, Alex stayed briefly with his relatives whom he met for the first time. His cousins of the same age took him out for a night on the town and showed him Manhattan. The next day he visited his high school friend who immigrated earlier and lived in another borough of New York City. Alex commented on how his relatives were impressed that he traveled on his own, did not get lost, and came back when promised. In general, he described coming to the US as the end of his Italian vacation. Alex started working menial jobs to make money, such as baking bread or loading trucks. His girlfriend joined him soon after that and they moved in together. The relationship did

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

not last long. According to Alex, it did not work because it was a temporary financial arrangement and because the relationship belonged to the old life in Russia. He also stated that while it was easier to be together financially, including the time spent in Italy, psychologically it was difficult. Alex emphasized throughout the interview that he prefers to be alone not to be responsible for others. At the same time, he acknowledged the positive impact his first girlfriend had on him. She educated him in humanities and changed his "user" attitude he previously had towards relationships.

Alex emphasized that he did not have any difficulty adjusting to the US. Because he always hated Russia and wanted to live in the US, he had no discomfort, enjoyed being in America, and had no nostalgic feelings about Russia. Alex had a goal of establishing his life here and felt prepared, in part because he had always been independent and self-sufficient in Russia. He stated that he never had any fears about the future or any emotional problems associated with immigration. Alex felt that the process was easier for him than for others. He knew English before he came, was willing to work hard, and did not miss his friends and peers. Because he had always been a loner, Alex did not pursue friendships right away and felt that they should develop gradually. Having said all that, he did acknowledge that he had the usual problems anyone would have: no money, hard jobs, problems with his girlfriend, feeling alone, having some problems at school, and difficulty with his English being understood by Americans. In response to the latter problem, Alex's belief was that it was the Americans who did not understand him who did not speak English well. While he pointed out his own efforts in accomplishing his goals, Alex also acknowledged the importance of his peer group and the Jewish community's support.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

During the first four years, Alex worked as a programmer. He became involved with another woman for three years. Having hated the dirty and crowded conditions of the city upon his arrival, Alex got a job and moved to New Jersey. However, after several months he realized that he had made a mistake. Because his parents, his girlfriend, and his friends lived in New York, Alex traveled over 200 miles every weekend and spent all his weekends in New York City. Alex gradually made a decision to go to law school and pursue this career path. It was at that time that he changed his first and last name to sound more American in order to provide himself with a larger client referral base after graduation. He continues to use his Russian name with his friends and acquaintances in the Russian community. Alex found a great apartment and moved back to the city. At that point, Alex felt that he missed his youth because he was working hard on establishing himself after immigrating. He decided to "become 18 again" and enjoy student life. Alex followed his motto that he needs to try almost everything in life.

After graduating from law school and finishing his specialization, Alex started looking for a job. He had difficulty finding a job. Alex believed that this was related to his age. He wanted to be respected and refused to show fake the enthusiasm of a recent graduate on interviews. Not long afterward, Alex was introduced to his future wife and started dating her. She came to the US on a student visa was studying for her MBA in another state. While working out the details of her application for permanent visa, Alex's future wife went back to Russia and got stuck there due to American bureaucracy. Approximately at the same time his father was diagnosed with brain cancer and was slowly dying. While Alex initially stated that his father's death was not so hard on him because they were not as close at the time, he was able to acknowledge that that year was the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

worst year in his life. He was waiting for his father's death, his future wife was stuck in Russia and was crying to him on the phone, and he could not get a job. Alex again stated that his father's death was harder on his mother and his grandmother than on him. As noted above, after his father's death, Alex became involved in his parents' business. Eventually, his future wife was able to come back to the US.

In terms of different stages and periods of his immigration process, Alex described two things. First, he spoke about his general development. Alex described several distinct periods in his life during the last ten to eleven years. There was a period of "tusovania[34]," hanging out with his friends and participating in many different cultural activities. Subsequently there was a period of trying different drugs. Alex changed peer groups depending on his interests and often lost friendships due to shifting interests. More recently he has had less interest in hanging out with people and prefers to stay home or spend time with his wife. Second, Alex also described three stages of adaptation to the US. The first stage he called illusion, in which someone wants and tries to become a part of American society. He stated that some people do not go through this stage, but for him it lasted about six months to a year. The next stage is disappointment and rejection of everything in this society. Alex said that this stage was not too intense for him. The final stage of peace and acceptance continues throughout life.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

When asked to free-associate about immigration, Alex's first response was

[34] "Tusovka" is slang for "gathering."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"nothing." Then he stated that he does not think about immigration in particular, but rather about his life. In spite of his initial minimal response to this question, Alex had many thoughts on the issue of immigration. He believes that he did not have a life in the FSU and that his life started after immigration. Alex stated that he feels more confident in his abilities and more relaxed. While he had always been serious and self sufficient, Alex believes that immigration brought about early maturity for him. That is why he later on decided to bring his youth back by experimenting with drugs and hanging out with peers. During the first interview, Alex compared preparing for immigration to preparing for one's parents' death. Later on he explained that while you can be cognitively prepared for difficult moments in your life, the actual experience is still different and more intense. Alex also spoke about being cut off from your familiar environment or leaving your comfort zone during the immigration process. Having the experience of leaving one's comfort zone and re-establishing in another place provides confidence. Alex also compared immigrating to learning how to swim. One is thrown into the water and has to swim out or drown.

Alex described one significant moment in his immigration experience. While studying a semester abroad during law school, Alex traveled around Europe. Only there did he realize for the first time that he changed and had become more Americanized. He felt surprised and disappointed at first and eventually accepted this fact. Throughout his life in the US, Alex could never establish close relationships with Americans due to language and culture barriers. He always considered and continues to consider Americans as ignorant and less well educated, with few exceptions. However, while in Europe, he felt much closer to Americans than Europeans. Alex realized that being an American was

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

now a part of him. Being an American is, in part, about a life style and cultural understanding. It is also about his love for America. Alex stated that there has been a change in that feeling. At first, his love for America was more about his hatred for Russia. As his hatred subsided gradually, Alex felt that America became his country. However, he also pointed out that when he is in America, he feels more Russian and would describe himself to others as Jewish. Internally, Alex would describe himself as Russian-Jewish-American, not in any particular order. He does not like visiting the Brighton Beach area because of its atmosphere. Although he is fluent in English, Alex mostly speaks Russian at work and at home. He does not like "Ruglish" because he wants to preserve his Russian language.

Alex has not returned to visit Russia since his departure. At first he cited his lack of money as the major reason for not going. However, when pressed to speculate about other reasons, Alex stated that for a long time he had no desire to go back. He emphasized that it was not an "active" lack of desire, i.e. rejection of Russia, but a "passive" lack of the need to go. Alex believes that his trip to Europe and the realization about his Americanization may have something to do with his newly developed wish to visit Russia. He stated that the only thing he misses is his city, and that he would love to just walk around there.

**Jewishness: then and now**

As noted before, Alex realized he was Jewish around the same time his parents were trying to immigrate. While he stated having only vague memories about that time, Alex remembered teachers' journals having his nationality written in it. He also spoke

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

about everyday anti-Semitism throughout his life, such as being called "a kike muzzle." At around age 15, he realized that he could be beaten up for being Jewish. Alex's mother always encouraged him to hit back in order to defend himself. Throughout his childhood, she also insisted that he only date Jewish girls and have Jewish friends because of their plans to immigrate. She was concerned that if he dated a non-Jew, he may not have been allowed to go to the US. Alex believed that this may have been related to his lack of friends until he became 18 and met Jews in college. When he was 18, Alex realized that he could not go to the college he wanted because he was Jewish. He was also aware of the anti-Semitism his parents experienced, including the lack of professional opportunities. His family was never religious and knew very little about Judaism. Only after Alex became involved in the Jewish community before his immigration did he started learning about Judaism. He also told me about getting a book of Jewish songs and learning to play them on guitar.

Being Jewish is very important to Alex. For him, it mostly means nationality, a sense of belonging to a group of people. When meeting a Jew, he feels that he or she is his own. Alex stated that Jewishness is a part of him. He feels proud of it, not necessarily for rational reasons. Jewishness is also about celebrating Jewish holidays, such as Passover and Yom Kippur, and remembering the Holocaust. However, Alex stated that since taking a course in Jewish history in college and attending the Holocaust museum, he tries not to think about those issues because he does not want to become upset again. Alex feels most Jewish when there is a threat to the Jewish community, such as the Middle East conflict, or when he hears Jewish music, or attends family gatherings. In terms of marrying a non-Jew, Alex stated that his wife is very knowledgeable and respectful of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jewish culture and traditions. Alex wants his future children to know about Jewish history and culture and to have similar feelings of pride. He wants them to know about Judaism, but he leaves the extent of their involvement with religion up to them.

Alex spoke about a change in his sense of Jewishness over time. In the past he had felt that he was a Jew first and everything else second. He used to go to synagogue more often and observe Jewish law. Now he feels that Jewishness is an important part of him, but not the most important. Alex mostly related this change to his own development and maturation. However, he also spoke about the immigration process and living in the US as contributing to this change. When he arrived in the US, Alex suddenly realized that he was no longer a Jew, but a Russian, and that Jews are the ones who go to synagogue and wear head covers. He could not provide examples, but talked about a sense that he was not seen a real Jew by American Jewry. However, Alex also spoke about the support and help he received from the Jewish community in the US upon his arrival.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## STORY OF ALEX: THEMES AND THOUGHTS

Theme 1: I am self sufficient. I am responsible for those close to me.

> If I am struggling, I prefer to be alone. (Why?) Because if someone comes over, you have to smile, and try to pretend that you feel better. The other way, you can lay down and turn your face to the wall, get yourself back together, and come back. It's not like I was struggling because I was struggling, but because someone else was struggling. I knew that there are people who need me. (p. 12)
>
> It is easier to be alone, not necessarily better. (p. 29)
>
> When I was growing up, you don't understand much, but I never wanted a dog, a cat, a brother, or a sister. (Why?) It's self-sufficiency. (Wait, self-sufficiency means that you can take care of yourself?) That you don't need anyone, that you entertain yourself. That you can come home at night, be alone, and you are not bored. You don't need someone to come over to entertain you, to read to you, to talk to you, to take you somewhere, to play with you. You will find something to do on your own. [ ] (What about taking care of someone? You did not need that either?) No, no, no. I don't need that. It only happens when I have someone close to me, it's not a feeling I can't live without [it]. I take care of someone because I am used to it. [ ] In this case, relationship is... well it's like... by definition: if I have someone, I take care of them. (pp. 32-33)

I counted at least 10 times during the interview when Alex raised the issue of his self-sufficiency and responsibility for people. His sense of self-sufficiency is not just about efficacy and independence. It is closely related to his relationships with others. When we spoke about the possible origins of this quality, Alex described having a very lonely childhood, including staying home alone at age 5. When he recounts all the things you "don't need" someone to do for you or with you, my immediate thought is how much he actually wanted and longed for that. He not only uses isolation of affect, but also reaction formation as his defense mechanisms. Alex learned to survive on his own. With time, he made friends and developed intimate relationships. Yet, in his mind, having an intimate relationship mostly means having the responsibility to take care of another person, not necessarily to be taken care of. He reminded me of what the fox told the Little Prince,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed" (Saint-Exupery, 1971). In order to take care of others, Alex has to isolate to take care of himself. As I will demonstrate below, he approached immigration in exactly the same way.

## My immigration journey: from there to here

Theme 2: I hated everything in Russia and always wanted to immigrate.

> It was my decision. Because they [parents] were satisfied with everything by that time. I told them that I will probably go. And by that time I have been sort of living, not on suitcases, but I had been living for a long time with the idea that I am going to leave pretty soon. And... you see, when you are not allowed to do something you want to do, little by little you start hating what's in your way. That's why I gradually came to the feeling that I just simply could not live there. I basically hated everything. (p. 9)

Similar to Boris' family, Alex's journey to immigration was quite long. The idea of immigration had been present in the family since he was a child. He makes it very clear that he not only wanted to immigrate, but that he "hated everything" in the former Soviet Union. Since Alex always knew that his family would be immigrating, I wondered whether he developed this hatred as a way to prepare himself for the potential loss. As we will see below, this hatred and intense desire to leave had a significant impact on his adjustment and adaptation. The way the decision to immigrate is made, or at least the way participants reconstruct this decision making process, influences their immigration experience. Once again, it is clear that Alex is another participant with a strong sense of agency.

Theme 3: I had no difficulty adjusting in the US.

> I never had this fear about the future that... I don't know, people are afraid to become homeless or something like that, many have depression. I did not have anything like that. Psychologically, I always felt good. [ ] I mean, most people, especially young generation, have depression, feel bad because they are pulled out

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> with their roots and have to find friends and everything is strange and unfamiliar here et cetera. It wasn't like this for me. (How was it?) I am quite self-sufficient. I was self-sufficient, I am self-sufficient here. That's why the lack of interactions did not bother me, and little by little it [a circle of friends] appeared. (p. 7)

As I noted before, Alex approaches immigration in the same way he approaches life. He uses denial ("I did not have anything like that"), isolates affect ("I was not depressed" and "I always felt good") and uses his self-sufficiency to cope with obvious loneliness and other difficulties he had to experience. Having said that, it is important to note that Alex's intense hatred of everything Soviet and his intense desire to immigrate contributed to his positive feelings:

> (Did you have any feelings of discomfort when you first arrived to the US?) You see, because I hated everything where I came from, everything that came after that was better. I mean, there were some temporary difficulties, which had always been there and will be there throughout life. There is nothing more permanent than temporary difficulties. But in general, I had this sense that - I left and it's wonderful. I still feel that way. (p. 21)

Later on, Alex spoke about his feelings of loneliness, lack of money, menial jobs, and school problems as some of the examples of these "temporary difficulties." Yet, the euphoria of finally leaving a "prison" helped him to cope. In addition to his self-sufficient approach, it was absolutely clear from the interviews how important peer relationships and community were for Alex's adjustment.

> It was easier to write than speak. I still write better, I think, than I speak in English. [ ] Because you have time to think. And I started to understand in about a month, I understood everything and since then I understood everything. There was nothing I didn't understand. It was possible that I was not understood on the street, but I believe that they don't know English. (p. 21)

Here we have another defense mechanism used by Alex, projection. It is impossible not to feel bad when you are not understood. Many participants spoke about feelings of embarrassment, anger, or shame. Alex's strategy is to project the feelings onto those who

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

elicit them in him.

> There are things that you know how to do. Some experiences that you encountered by accident. Some configuration of behavior. That's your *comfort zone*. In order to exist in this country, you don't have to strain yourself. Every time you leave this, you leave the boundaries of your *comfort zone*, it's something new. To learn something new, to try to act differently, et cetera. It's always stress, people try to stay in the *comfort zone*. Immigration sort of kicks you out of the *comfort zone*. On the other hand, and the attitude, it becomes more familiar and less scary to leave the *comfort zone*. That's why you can change things for life. (p. 58)

Alex's metaphors were in some ways more expressive about his experience than his actual descriptions. He describes a change in his "comfort zone," an equivalent to Hartmann's "average expectable environment" (1959). The words Alex uses in his metaphors are violent and harsh: "kicked out," "thrown into the water," "cut off," or "death." I believe they indicate the real extent of the struggle he experienced and survived. It reminded me of Vlad's metaphor of "breaking a bone" or Anna's metaphor of "cutting ligaments." Like many other participants, Alex's ability to survive teaches him the value of taking a risk.

**Immigration experience: here I am**

Theme 4: It was a gradual process of adjustment and personal change.

> But America is a part of me, part of my world view. (It wasn't like that from the beginning, was it?) Of course, not. But it happened gradually over 10 years, little by little. It's just when it happens every day little by little, you don't notice. You only notice when you have a reference point... (*Comparison...*) *basis for comparison*? I don't know how to translate *basis*. [ ] Or when people come to visit from Russia and I see that they are absolutely different. [ ] They behave differently. Their eyes are different. Those who just came or came to visit. A different look. (p.26)

Similar to many participants, Alex describes a gradual change in himself. He eloquently points out that one needs external validation of such change. While Alex was able to acknowledge and even accept this change in himself, Boris was traumatized by his

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

trip to Russia and has not recovered.

> From then on I realized that I became a part of this culture. Whether I want it or not, that's how it will be. (What does it mean for you to be an American?) It's an attitude towards life. If they don't bring a menu right away in a coffee shop, but in five minutes, it irritates me. And et cetera. It's a small example, but it shows a general life attitude. [ ] I most likely became a New Yorker, but for me it is America, the America I know and love most of all. [ ] (If you watch, let's say, Olympic games and Russians are against Americans, who do you root for?) Americans. (Why?) It's my country. (Was it like this from the beginning or it changed at some point?) I think it was from the beginning. Well, before it was because I consciously did not like what I left behind, remember we talked about how I hated everything. Over time, this hatred diminished little by little, but during this time, America became my country. (p. 36)

The first thing Alex says indicates some discomfort with the idea of a change in his identity. When he spoke about his initial surprise and disappointment after realizing that he became Americanized, Alex expresses a desire to preserve his identity. He did not plan on changing it. In addition, it was not only a gradual change in Alex himself, but also a gradual change in his feelings about Russia and America. Alex is able to distinguish between his affection for America immediately after immigration in contrast to his current sentiments. The difference is in its relationship to his feelings about Russia. It appears that as his hatred for Russia subsided, Alex was able to develop a genuine relationship to America. As Akhtar (1999) indicated, the gradual movement on the dimension of drives and affects (from love or hate to ambivalence) indicates a synthesis of two self-representations. However, it is important to note that this affection for America does not imply an ability to have relationships with Americans. Similar to Vlad, at this point in Alex's life there is a distinction between the two.

> [Talking about why he did not go to visit Russia.] I did not have the desire. There is "don't-want-to" that's written together, and "don't want to" that's written separately. "Don't-want-to" that's written together is an active "don't-want-to." "Don't want to" that's written separately - it's simply "don't want to." I did not

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> have an active, I just did not want to, I did not have a need, not that I rejected something on purpose. (At what point did you begin wanting to go visit?) Well, it just became interesting. (Was it after your trip to Holland?) Yes. I mean I don't know if it is related, but after I came back from Europe, I felt very strongly how much I became an American. Maybe that's why, maybe it's related, maybe not. (p. 35)

Once again, Alex confirms the significance of his trip to Europe. He implies that there is a connection between his realization of personal change and the emergence of his wish to visit Russia. I believe that he wants to reconnect not only with the country, but also with the aspects of himself he left there. Anna described the beneficial aspects of her first trip back to Russia as she was able to get some parts of herself back. While some authors indicate the positive impact of visits to the home country for one's adjustment and identity, I would argue that an immigrant has to be ready for such a trip. Otherwise, it may have negative consequences, such as Boris' cutting off all ties with people in Ukraine after his trip.

Alex uses the words "do not need" to describe the reasons for not wanting to go visit Russia. What he really needed was to split off Russia and any positive feelings toward it in order to adapt. Alex indicates, however, that this lack of desire was not an active rejection of Russia. I wonder whether at some point he actually engaged in active rejection which eventually changed into the passive form. It reminded me of Anna's distinction between aggressive and passive melancholia. While Anna did not want to immigrate and Alex hated Russia, both engaged in splitting and rejection of the two countries.

> (Were there any stages of adaptation that you noticed?) Well, probably the stage of wanting to climb into this society, which is a stage of illusions. (Stage of illusions. OK) Stage of rejecting everything in this society. Stage of disappointment. And a stage of making peace and accepting, which probably

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> stays. Some people don't have the first stage [ ] and immediately begin the stage of disappointment. (Did you have the first stage?) No, I had the stage of illusions for about six months to a year. The stage of disappointment was not very intense for me. (p. 56)

Alex uses minimization to defend against conflictual or negative feelings. He is trying to present himself to me as a successful individual who had little problems adjusting. Alex begins his description of adaptation stages with a wish to fit into American society. Considering his hatred for Russia, it is consistent with his world view and goals. Similarly, Andrei chose to live in a Southern state for the same reason. However, Alex considers it to be an illusion, something he cannot achieve. I believe that he refers to his difficulty establishing relationships with Americans, which for him is the real indication of being a part of the society. The next stage is disappointment and consequent rejection of American society. Alex's response to negative emotional experiences is to use splitting, i.e. rejection. The last stage of acceptance, however, reflects his ability to cope with ambivalence. The Kleinian theory of paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions can be applied here. There is continuous movement between the two positions in regard to Alex's thoughts and feelings about Russia and America, as well as his self-representations. Another example is Alex's name change. On one hand, at first he tried to fit in and be a part of the society. On the other hand, he continues to use his Russian name and reports no internal conflicts about it.

Theme 5: My life started in America. I am more confident now.

> How can I tell you. I left at age 20. Pretty young. And most events..., I think, some say that after 17 people don't change. But I believe that most events that affected who I am today, they happened here. And who I became, it happened under the influence of certain factors that happened here. Nothing connects me to that [Russia], except that I was born and raised there. I never had nostalgia, I was a refusenik, I always wanted to leave. (p. 4)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Now I believe in myself much more, I became much more relaxed. (You think it's related to age or to immigration also?) You see, I don't have a concept of immigration. It's life. I mean there are people who had one life there and then a new life started. Sort of, like two lives of immigration. Immigration is a second life. I did not have such a life. I was a student who did not do anything serious in that life. My life started here. (p. 19)

Similar to many participants, Alex emphasizes the significant impact immigration had on his identity. He goes so far as to say that his life started in the US. He became more confident and relaxed, he started his career and family, and went through the pain of his father's death and joy of reliving his adolescence. At the same time, Alex is somewhat dismissive of the "concept of immigration." His insistence on completely separating the two lives speaks to his need to use splitting as a defense.

> (You said that if immigration affected you in any way it is that you became more confident in yourself.) To some extent, yes. Because, so to say, some things that when I was leaving I believed that [I could], I realized that I can. (You realized that you can because you tried and you could?) Yes. But it is not necessarily immigration. It's possible that it is just the fact that I became older. (p. 54)

Like other participants, Alex's increased confidence is a result of taking risks and succeeding. It is a realization that one can overcome obstacles and deal with challenges.

The difficulty distinguishing the impact of the immigration process and normal developmental process is obvious. In many cases, it is interrelated. For example, Alex commented that having to work hard and establish himself immediately following immigration took away his "youth." Later on, he decided to get it back in concrete ways, such as experimenting with drugs and hanging out with his peers. However, Alex consistently tries to minimize or dismiss his immigration process or its impact. When asked whether things would have been different had he stayed in Russia, Alex rejected that possibility. He oscillates between wanting to separate the two lives, yet deny any change.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Jewishness: then and now**

Theme 6: Being Jewish is very important to me and means several things.

> I knew I was a Jew from quite an early age. I don't know, 8-9-10 years-old. (How did you know?) I don't remember how I learned. I knew because it was written in the teacher's journal. I knew before that that I was a Jew. That's how my classmates found out, from the journal. [ ] (What kind of feelings did you have about it?) I did not have feelings of pity about it, regret or rejection, like many other people have. I just simply don't remember that part of my life. I knew that our friends were leaving, when I was 5-6 years-old, with their kids. (p. 52)

Similar to most participants, the first realization of being Jewish is related to anti-Semitism and feeling different. Consistent with who he is, Alex first denies any feelings about it and then talks about having no memories about that "part of my life." I can speculate that he uses repression as another defense mechanism. Similarly, he had no memories about saying goodbye to his parents on the day of his departure. As he matured, Alex had clear memories about fighting with his peers trying to defend himself as a Jew. Such an attitude was encouraged by his parents. Alex's early sense of Jewishness was also related to immigration, or rather seeing other people immigrate.

> It's nationality. It was never a religion and will probably never be. Nationality is belonging to a certain group of people. (From what you told me before, you are obviously proud of it?) Yes, to some extent. [ ] (What are you proud of?) I can't explain it. (Some qualities?) It's not about qualities. It's simply belonging. [ ] (When someone says, "it's a Jew," what does it mean to you?) That he is more of my own. Yes. That he will probably understand me better. (pp. 43-44)

> (When do you especially feel Jewish?) When there are threats to Jewish nationality or, I don't know, faith. Like the things in the Middle East, fires in synagogues, vandalism at the cemetery... [ ] (How about when you hear Jewish music at a wedding, do you have any feelings?) Yes, of course. (What about other moments?) I don't know, if we get together as a family during holidays. (p. 45)

Alex talks about the multiple meanings of being Jewish: belonging to a group of people,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

culture and family, pride, religion, and identification with the struggles of Jewish people for justice. There is also a sense that because Jewishness is such an integral and fundamental part of him, it makes it very difficult for him to explain.

Theme 7: The meaning of being Jewish changed over time.

> I became less of a Jew with age, I mean I was more Jewish. (What does it mean?) I needed it more as a part of me. I fasted at some point, I went to a synagogue, I was more, I was more of a Jew. (It's an interesting concept that you can be more or less Jewish?) Well, eight years ago I was first of all a Jew and then everything else. And now it's a part of me, not necessarily the most important one. (Do you mean in terms of behavior or internally?) In terms of inner sense. Exactly in terms of inner sense. I was a very strong Jew when I was leaving. When I came here, I found out that I was not a Jew, but a Russia, and that Jews are the ones who go to synagogue and wear a hat. (pp. 48-49)

The concept of being "more or less Jewish" implies judgment about one's religiosity and observance. On one hand, there is an outside judgment by American Jewry. On the other hand, Alex refers to the internal process and change. He emphasizes that Jewishness remains a part of him. Yet it does not define who he is. I believe that, during the years before immigration, being "more Jewish" provided Alex with a community, friendships and peers, and a way to prepare for his upcoming immigration.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Chapter 4

## Demographic Patterns and Examination of Thematic Experience

Following a description of the participants' demographic characteristics, I will provide a summary of the major themes that emerged from the data across all participants. The summary will be separated into two major subsections: the Immigration Experience and Jewishness. In the section on Immigration Experience, I will provide the specific demographics concerning facts of participants' immigration. The following themes in this section will be described: 1) The impact of the decision-making process on adaptation; 2) the multiplicity of affective experiences associated with the immigration process; 3) similarities and differences in participants' descriptions of the immigration process and its stages; 4) the range of experiences in participants' current relationship with Russianness and Americanness; and, 5) the impact of the immigration process on participants' identity seen as a positive experience at a cost.

Next, the themes pertaining to Jewishness will be described: 1) Multiple and coexisting meanings of Jewish identity; 2) varying ways in which participants responded to anti-Semitism and feeling different; and 3) impact of immigration on participants' Jewish identity. A theoretical elaboration of the ideas conveyed in the following presentation will be undertaken in the next chapter. Appendix F presents all first order I-themes for all ten participants.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## 4.1 Participants

Table 1 presents participants' demographic information, including age, gender, relationship status, education, and current employment. Five men and six women participated in this study. The age range was between 26 and 34 years old. Eight participants were married, one was single, and two were divorced. Two participants were currently not involved in a relationship. Three participants had children at the time of the interviews. All participants had college or graduate level of education.

Table 1: Participants' current demographics

| Participant | Age | Gender | Relationship Status | Education | Job |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boris | 32 | M | Married, 1 child | MA | Programmer |
| Regina | 34 | F | Married | BA | Freelance illustrator |
| Mark | 31 | M | Divorced, not involved | BS, CPA | Programmer-liaison |
| Natasha | 30 | F | Single, not involved | BA | Computer consultant |
| Lena | 26 | F | Married | BBA | Account manager, marketing |
| Olga | 28 | F | Married | BA | Privacy quality administrator |
| Masha | 32 | F | Married, 2 children | CSW | Social worker |
| Anna | 31 | F | Divorced, involved, 1 child | MA | Web designer, currently unemployed |
| Andrei | 33 | M | Married | MSEE, MBA | Assistant VP - finance |
| Vlad | 31 | M | Married | MBA | Analyst/finance |
| Alex | 31 | M | Married | JD, LLM | Business manager |

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## 4.2 Immigration Experience

Demographic information about participants' immigration

Table 2 presents participants' country of origin, year of immigration, number of years in the US, and age on arrival to the US. All but one participant came to the US as a Jewish refugee. Lena came on a student visa and stayed. Two participants, Boris and Alex, came from families who were refuseniks in the late 1970s. Three participants came from Ukraine, five from Russia, two from Belarus, and one from Moldova. Three participants arrived in the US through Italy. The participants in this study all belong to the fourth wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union. They came between 1989 and 1995 and have been in this country between 5 and 11 years. Natasha, who immigrated 5 years ago, first came to the US as a student 8 years ago. The participants' age on arrival to the US ranged from 18 to 25. In addition, most participants came with their immediate and extended families. Lena, Alex, and Regina came on their own and were joined by their families later on.

Table 2: Immigration demographics

| Participant | Country of origin | Year of immigration | Years in US | Age on arrival to US |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boris | Ukraine, through Italy | 1989 | 11 | 21 |
| Regina | Russia | 1993 | 8 | 25 |
| Mark | Moldova | 1991 | 9 | 22 |
| Natasha | Russia | 1995 | 5 | 25 |
| Lena | Ukraine | 1992 | 8 | 18 |
| Olga | Ukraine, through Italy | 1990 | 11 | 18 |
| Masha | Russia | 1991 | 9 | 23 |
| Anna | Russia | 1992 | 9 | 22 |
| Andrei | Belarus | 1992 | 8 | 25 |
| Vlad | Belarus | 1991 | 9 | 22 |
| Alex | Russia, through Italy | 1990 | 11 | 21 |

Theme 1: How the decision to immigrate was made had an impact on the participants' adaptation process.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

For many participants the process of immigration and decision-making began long before their departure. As noted above, Boris and Alex knew about their parents' refusenik status when they were children. Andrei's, Olga's, and Anna's parents considered immigrating in the late 1970s and decided not to leave at that time. Most participants provided similar reasons for immigration. As the political and economic conditions in the former Soviet Union began to deteriorate, participants became concerned about their inability to succeed there and the increase in daily and institutional anti-Semitism. They also spoke about the exodus of the Jewish community due to the same reasons, as well as about wanting a better life for themselves and their future children, as other motivating factors for their decision to leave. In addition, Andrei and Vlad, the two participants from Belarus, spoke about the Chernobyl explosion and its consequences as another incentive for immigration. Once again, the deteriorating economic and political conditions in the FSU contributed not only to the possibility of such an accident, but also to inappropriate and poor governmental response to that disaster[35]. For some immigrants personal factors were more crucial in affecting their decision to move. Regina decided to immigrate due to her sense of dissatisfaction with her career and personal life. During her studies in Alaska, Natasha decided that living in the US fit her privacy needs better. Lena wanted to leave to experience a sense of freedom. In addition to personal dynamics in their decisions, all three were hoping that the move to the US would give them what they believed they could not get in the FSU: the freedom to enable self-actualization.

[35] The people in the FSU, including the areas affected by the disaster, had no information about the accident, radiation levels, or necessary precautions until one week after the explosion. Even after news was made public, the government continuously minimized the extent of the disaster and its consequences.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Despite the fact that most participants immigrated to the US on the official refugee status, their internal experience and reasons for immigration varied. The literature typically identifies immigration status, e.g. refugee and exile, immigrant, migrant, as one of the main factors responsible for migrants' responses and ways of coping with this process (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). It is generally argued that refugees and exiles have a more difficult adjustment process due to the forced nature of their departure. For example, a refugee from Sierra Leone escaping death, mutilation, torture, or imprisonment falls in this category. However, in case of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union the situation is more complicated. On one hand, they were forced to leave because of anti-Semitism and difficult economic and political conditions. As Andrei stated, "the term 'refugee' is about the fact that people [ ] were selling everything and running and knew that there is no way back because they could no longer live there." On the other hand, for most of them, it was a gradual process of leaving with their families and communities to have a better life. Their inner sense of this experience and the narratives they have constructed over the years have more meaning for them than their official immigration status.

Despite similar reasons for immigration, the participants may be divided into three subgroups according to how they immigrated: 1) those who felt that they had made their own decision; 2) those who described going along with others; and, 3) those who felt forced to leave.

The participants who made their own decision to immigrate include Regina, Natasha, Lena, Andrei, Vlad, and Alex. Andrei and Vlad spoke about a gradual development of their wish to immigrate and eventually pushing their parents to do so.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Regina left Russia to make a change in her life and brought her mother later on when she made the final decision to stay in the US. Natasha and Lena first came to the US as students. Natasha enjoyed the freedom and privacy of her life in America and returned to the FSU to complete the application process to immigrate with her family. Lena came to study Judaism and knew that she wanted to stay here because of anti-Semitism and the Soviet system, but only told her family about her decision a year later. She stayed here illegally, eventually married another Russian immigrant, became a permanent resident, and was able to bring her family along. Alex always hated the Soviet system and wanted to immigrate for as long as he was able to remember. In general, these six people have a strong sense of agency and an active coping style. Consistent with this approach to life, they took an active stance in the process of immigration. They continued to be active in subsequent decisions about career, education, and relationships in their lives in the US. These participants appeared to experience less ambivalence about their decisions and efforts in adjusting to the US. As I noted previously, it is difficult to say whether for some of the participants the present view of themselves as playing a major role in the decision to immigrate is a narrative reconstruction. To own the decision and have an active role in it helps to feel some sense of control over one's life in the context of a dramatic and overwhelming change.

Boris, Mark, and Olga went along with their families and communities. Boris had some trouble making the decision to immigrate because he did not want to leave his friends and the familiarity of his home environment. He simply went along with the wave of Jewish emigration, explaining, "I really wasn't thinking all that much about it, it's sort of something, a thing that everybody was doing. Mark and Olga simply complied with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their families' decisions. Olga, who was 18 at the time, was kept in the dark regarding all preparations due to her parents' fear of potential persecution. Mark supported his mother's decision to immigrate for a better life. Both Mark and Olga generally exhibited a more passive approach to life and tended to need external validation and motivation. For example, Mark followed his mother's and wife's insistence on getting married before immigrating and made the decision about his college major and career path based on his friend's advice. Olga followed her mentor's advice about not pursuing the field of psychology and her husband's decision about the type of job she should get. Boris followed his relatives' advice about education and reported feeling regret later on. In contrast to the first group, the participants in this subgroup expressed more conflicting feelings about immigration. It is difficult to say whether other participants, such as Olga or Mark, may have felt forced to immigrate but were able to reconstruct their narratives to feel more control in their lives, in contrast to Masha and Anna described below.

Masha and Anna are the two participants who felt forced to immigrate. Masha was always terrified of immigrating, was happy with her career in Russia, and felt forced by her husband's family to move. At the same time, she was also terrified to stay because of the deteriorating political and economic situation in Russia. While she may have been somewhat depressed before, following to the decision to immigrate Masha developed severe depression and panic attacks. Upon her arrival in the US, she continued to have emotional difficulties and struggled to adjust. She described her immigration experience as traumatic and very difficult. Similar to Masha, Anna never wanted to immigrate. She was satisfied professionally and personally in Russia. However, when her mother's cancer relapsed, Anna was forced to come to the US to take care of her mother and brother. She

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

resented being in America, missed Russia, and felt miserable. Similar to Masha, Anna had pre-existing vulnerabilities which were exacerbated by the stress of her immigration experience. She also perceived immigration as traumatic and believed that the pain of it would continue for life, explaining, "If you get a deep cut, through ligaments, it will hurt all your life." Both women acknowledged that having been forced to immigrate had a negative impact on their emotional state and ability to adjust in the US. As I sought to demonstrate in the write-ups of their stories, in addition to being forced to leave, both women had pre-existing psychological vulnerabilities which contributed to their emotional struggles.

Theme 2: Multiplicity of affective experiences associated with immigration process

The participants reflected on a number of feelings and thoughts they associated with the immigration experience. These covered the gamut from sadness, embarrassment, anxiety, joy, to anger. While some thoughts and feelings appeared to be universal, others were more prevalent in certain participants. A pattern of interplay of certain feelings and their connection to particular defensive styles emerged.

*Uncertainty and Fear of the Unknown.* Most participants acknowledged either feelings of uncertainty or anxiety about the unknown. For example, fear of the unknown was the dominating affective experience for Mark, which was consistent with his overall passive style of approaching life. He spoke in detail about the "normal" experience of fear when one enters the new environment. This fear motivated him to study English and learn about Americans and American culture. Boris also spoke about simultaneous feelings of fear of the unknown and excitement he experienced before leaving Ukraine. Andrei spoke about the importance of "not being afraid of change," overcoming fear and perseverance.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As Vlad said, "just don't give up." The fear of the unknown that Mark and others described had a different quality than the overwhelming and paralyzing panic and anxiety Masha reported. The three people who generally denied having negative feelings (Natasha, Andrei, and Alex) did acknowledge a sense of uncertainty. It appears that those participants who reported fear as one of the dominant feelings about immigration experience had a more passive approach to life, as well as a tendency to depend on others and accept their decisions.

*Loneliness and the Need for Connection.* Many participants expressed feelings of loneliness and spoke about wanting to feel connected. Those who immigrated alone were particularly vulnerable (Regina and Lena). Lena explicitly spoke about wanting to get married in order to have someone close to her with whom to share her life. Some participants did not acknowledge feelings of sadness or loneliness (Andrei, Natasha, Mark, or Alex). However, in one way or another they spoke about a sense of being alone, a search for new friends, or need for connection. Mark was protected from experiencing loneliness because he was married. Andrei focused on attending his local synagogue to establish community and contact with others. Natasha expressed feelings of insecurity because she did not have her own circle of friends. All participants spoke about the loss of friends during immigration as the major loss and emphasized the importance of peer relationships and friendships in their adjustment process. Considering participants' developmental stage at the time of immigration, this is not surprising. All immigrated between 18 and 25, an age when, in general, one consolidates identity and establishes intimate relationships (Erikson, 1959). To be uprooted at this age means being forced to recreate one's peer group, which is a time-consuming process.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

*Nostalgia.* Many participants spoke about missing their native cities, streets, and objects they left behind (Regina, Mark, Natasha, Olga, Masha, Anna, Alex, Lena). The importance of the non-human environment at a time of significant change is readily acknowledged in the literature (Akhtar, 1999; de Vryer, 1989; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Hartmann, 1959). While some participants did speak about people they missed (Olga, Vlad), most of them immigrated with families and communities which provided their immediate environment. Anna spoke about "recreating Russia" in her apartment. Olga most eloquently described a change in her nostalgic feelings. While at first she actually longed to return to her home town and to see her friend, over time her nostalgic feelings were similar to those many of us feel about our childhood. De Vryer's (1989) differentiation between homesickness and nostalgia fits well in the present study. "In nostalgia the longing or yearning is for a lost past without a desire to actually return... The memories are consistently of places and nonhuman experiences, not of people" (p. 77). While the awareness of the loss is painful, the presence of these objects in memory is soothing. In contrast, homesickness can be resolved by returning "home." However, as many participants commented, the country they left no longer existed. Their friends had left or changed, the political and economic systems are different, and they have little in common with those who are still there. To be able to experience the feelings of nostalgia Olga described, an immigrant must move on and reestablish him or herself internally in the new world without the need to use splitting.

*Excitement and Sadness.* Regina, Olga, Vlad, Lena, and Boris described at some point having mixed feelings of joy and excitement about moving to a new country and sadness about leaving their native land. Regina commented, "It was a painful process, but

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

at the same time there was joy and happiness from little, ordinary things." While Boris did not explicitly talk about sadness, he commented about "hating to leave my friends and my country." Alex denied feelings of sadness but spoke about his joy of leaving the "hated" country. In terms of the participants' feelings of excitement and joy, two patterns emerged. Olga, Alex, and Lena, who focused primarily on these feelings before immigrating, represent the first pattern. There was no conscious acknowledgment of sadness or loss. These feelings either came later (for Lena) or became expressed in another way (through Olga's poetry and letters). I believe that in these two cases, excitement and joy functioned as a manic or hypomanic defense which helped them cope with negative feelings. Feelings of elation can be seen as manic defenses when they are incongruous with the reality of experiencing a sense of loss[36]. The second pattern is represented by Vlad, Boris, and Regina who expressed both sadness and joy at the time of immigration. In this case, the feelings of excitement, joy, and hope served as a buffer and motivating factor to help them cope with the difficulties of the adjustment to a new country. A fast and busy routine during the first months to a year after immigrating in some cases may also be seen as another expression of a manic defense. All participants, except for Olga and Masha, described their hard work and survival soon after immigrating. Such work is absolutely necessary in order to learn the new environment and adjust. However, when there is a denial of any negative or painful feelings as well, this then represents a manic defense (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). According to the latter authors, it is not unusual for people to become depressed later on in their

[36] As noted previously, "manic" defense here does not refer to the clinically defined manic episode of someone who is suffering from the bipolar disorder.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigration process when they feel more stable. Masha provided such an example when describing her husband's experience. An ability to experience both excitement and sadness at the same time may also speak to these participants' ability to tolerate healthy ambivalence.

*Depression and Anger.* While it is possible that many participants experienced feelings of anger at certain points during the immigration process, only four spoke about them explicitly (Lena, Masha, Anna, Vlad). Those four also reported significant levels of depression at various times. Lena related her depression and anger to the difficulties of surviving on her own in the first two years in the US. The negative experiences she went through contributed to her distrust of people, resentment at those who did not support her, and a sense of loneliness. For Vlad, the anger came across in his continued resentment of his extended family and their lack of support, as well as his negative feelings towards Americans, whereas his depression was related to missing his girlfriend. Masha and Anna are two participants who were forced to immigrate and who had pre-existing emotional vulnerabilities. Both reported clinical depression which interfered with their functioning. While Anna's anger was externalized and more obvious, Masha's expression of anger was more passive, and expressed as inactivity which put the weight of the adjustment problems on her husband's shoulders. Not surprisingly, it appears that those who have not worked through their anger remain vulnerable for depression. As Anna put it, "It's a shock and a feeling that you don't want to do anything, you don't want to be here, you don't want to live. Next is that it's *OK*. I am already here. There is nothing you can do, there is no way back. And melancholia starts, you know? But not an aggressive one, you know, not aggressive negativism, but passive melancholia."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

*Inferiority and Embarrassment.* Although the literature describes feelings of insecurity and shame as being typical of immigrants' experiences (Akhtar, 1999; Zaborowski, 1999), fewer than half of the participants in the current study reflected on such feelings. Mark spoke about his apprehension and embarrassment in college when he could not express himself adequately. However, these feelings only motivated him to learn English and become familiar with American culture. In contrast, Natasha and Vlad were more explicit in describing their feelings of being "stupid," "inferior," "abnormal," "weird," and "different." Natasha remains sensitive about her accent because it makes her stand out. In Vlad's denigrating comments about Americans one can hear the underlying feelings of inferiority and inadequacy he defends against. While Andrei and Alex did not openly acknowledge such feelings of inadequacy, the data provided enough information to speculate about their presence. When Alex felt misunderstood by Americans, he stated that it was because "they did not speak good English." Andrei continuously expressed his wish to be on top, to be respected, and to be taken seriously. He also spoke about "teaching Americans how to live" several months after immigrating. This comment about his sense of being superior to Americans immediately followed Andrei's description of his confusion in dealing with "complications" of the American way of life. Once again, the denial of negative or painful feelings in this instance can be regarded as a defense against feelings of embarrassment. Overall, the participants who experienced feelings of embarrassment or inferiority used splitting as one of their major defenses. For example, Vlad frequently commented about the differences between Americans and Russian immigrants and described them in diametrically opposed terms: Russians are superior and Americans are inferior.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

*Unnamed Feelings.* Several participants denied any negative or painful feelings related to their immigration experience. Such denial indicates the presence of some type of discomfort, whether it be anxiety, stress, or sadness. This denial was explicitly present in the three participants who generally tended to intellectualize and focus on thoughts rather than on feelings: Natasha, Andrei, and Alex. While Vlad also denied any nostalgic or sad feelings related to immigration, he was eventually able to acknowledge some of them. Those who continuously insisted on "not having" any sadness, loss, fear, or discomfort seemed to use denial as a way to present themselves as stronger, more adjusted, and secure. Andrei explained that having such feelings would mean "focusing on the past," which in turn only leads to failure and inability to succeed. He may have been referring to "dwelling on" rather than simply "having" feelings. However, I believe that for Andrei, simply experiencing sadness and loss brought up anxiety about their impact on his ability to function. These three participants were also among those who felt insecure and inferior (as described above) and used splitting as a defense as well. For example, the splitting was present as Natasha completely separated herself from Russian aspects of her life. Likewise, Alex rejected Russia and idealized America upon his arrival. It is of interest that all three really wanted to immigrate and saw America as the country they always wanted to live in. It appears that after finally reaching their ultimate destination, cognitive dissonance was too dangerous and they could not allow themselves to have negative feelings towards this country.

In sum, most participants experienced feelings of uncertainty and fear of the unknown, loneliness and need for connection, and nostalgia about cities and objects in Russia. These findings are consistent with the research and theoretical literature which

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

indicates that such affects are universal experiences associated with a significant change in one's life. Those participants who experienced mixed feelings of joy and sadness were able to use positive attitudes and emotions, as well as manic defenses, to help them cope with negative affects and to have healthy ambivalence. Immigrants who reported feelings of anger appeared to remain vulnerable to develop symptoms of depression. Only five participants reported feelings of embarrassment or inferiority. This appeared to be associated in each case with a defensive style of splitting. Similarly, those participants who denied any negative feelings used a similar defensive style and generally preferred to focus on thoughts, rather than feelings. It is important to note that an in-depth analysis of each participant indicated a close relationship between the dominating affects they reported and their general defensive style and identity.

Theme 3: Similarities and differences in participants' descriptions of the immigration process and its stages

One of the questions raised in the current study was to develop a description of the participants' experience of immigration and personal change. As noted in the literature review, there are a number of different stage models of the immigration process (adaptation, adjustment, acculturation, or assimilation, depending on the particular model). The current study was more specifically focused on the participants' internal experience of this process.

*Similarities.* All participants agreed in describing the immigration process as one of *gradual change*. They called it "slow," "smooth," or had some difficulty identifying specific stages. For some, the recognition and realization that something had changed came from external sources. For example, Alex, Anna, and Lena spoke about their visit to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Europe or the FSU as the first time they realized they had changed. Alex was surprised to learn that he had become Americanized. While he was disappointed at first, he gradually accepted this fact. Anna and Lena described a realization that they had become harsher and more independent, as noted by their friends who stayed behind. Participants also spoke about particular moments of awareness that they could better understand and speak English, that they could interact with Americans and discuss pop culture, or that they had difficulty speaking Russian.

Most participants, except for Natasha, Olga, and Masha, described the initial stress and hard work of trying to survive financially. Despite the fact that many of them had a college education, they frequently worked one or more menial jobs to support themselves and their families. They delivered pizza, made bread, distributed coupons, or worked as cashiers, technicians, or mechanics. Boris described this period as a "bowl of shit" every immigrant eats. It is difficult and painful. Vlad spoke in detail about his feeling that he was not recognized for who he was, but rather as someone who has no money or drives an old car. Regina spoke about her fear of being fired from a restaurant because she had difficulty understanding English. Some were driven by a desire to get back on their feet and achieve more (Andrei and Vlad). Others, like Anna, felt responsible for taking care of their families. Although Masha did engage in going to school and working, the bulk of financial and day-to-day responsibilities fell on her husband's shoulders because of her depression and inability to be active. Olga was supported by her mother and grandmother which provided her with an opportunity to study and volunteer. Because of her previous experience as a student in the US and work experience with an American company in Russia, Natasha was able to get an administrative job which made her initial transition

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

somewhat easier. However, she acknowledged that the lack of knowledge about American business and culture made it difficulty for her to understand fully what kind of job she was getting. Only later on did Natasha realize that the job title was deceiving.

The pattern of adaptation described by participants typically included references to the *process of learning the new environment*. While some came to the US having learned English in the FSU, they all had to learn conversational American English and slang to adequately understand others. They learned from other immigrants about customs, traditions, and habits of American life. The participants also described "water cooler" conversations at work or interactions in school as an essential part of the learning process. Watching television, reading books and journals, and attending cultural events also contributed to their knowledge. The more participants had an opportunity to interact with Americans, the more comfortable they felt over time. This process of learning a new environment appears to be related to the next theme that emerged from the narratives: re-establishing stability. Without knowing the new language, the new environment, and the new culture, it is impossible to experience a sense of stability that the immigrants enjoyed before emigrating.

One of the overarching themes throughout participants' description of the immigration process was the *process of re-establishing stability when dealing with a significant change*. Most of them spoke about the gradual process of getting back on their feet financially and feeling more secure. In addition to financial security, they also established new relationships and communities. While for Andrei and Vlad having a better job and making more money was more important in feeling stable, for Lena and Olga getting married provided them with a sense of stability. Mark and Anna spoke about

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Judaism and belonging to the Jewish nation as a source of stability. Natasha reflected that "when you move somewhere and some things that you always thought to be natural, just occurrences, the way the world is. And then you see that there are very few permanent things, and that you really cannot depend on anything. I think immigration opens your eyes." Stability became very important to her. For some participants establishing stability and the importance of this process were related to their personal dynamics. While Mark's marriage initially provided him with a sense of security, he lost his "ground" in the subsequent divorce. Olga and Anna reflected on the events in their lives prior to immigration which contributed to their longing for stability, such as their parents' difficult relationships or lack of trust in men. Olga emphasized the importance of community in re-establishing her sense of stability, saying, "Faces familiar from your childhood. People who, you have something to talk about with them. People can give you some *perspective*, you know. There is stability of the fact that you did not leave for nothing."

*Differences.* The areas of disagreement among participants included the following questions: 1) whether their "immigration process" was over or it continues; 2) whether it involves the process of mourning the loss and letting go; and, 3) which particular life transitions were involved.

In terms of the first question, it is important to note that all participants in this study have been in the US between 5 and 10 years. Their sense of whether their immigration process is over or continues was independent of the length of their stay in the US. Only three participants expressed a sense that the *"immigration process continues"* in their present lives. Regina compared her global process of adjustment to learning English. She described experiencing a slow upward movement with smaller ups and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

downs on a daily basis. Masha and Anna continue to struggle with accepting their immigration to the US and moving on. There is a qualitative difference between these two views. Regina refers to micro-level movements and oscillations in her English fluency and her relationship with her American husband. This process appears to be parallel to the general developmental trajectory of one's life. In contrast, Masha and Anna are still working through the residual emotional baggage attached to forced immigration. The remainder of the participants explicitly or implicitly seem to believe that the *"immigration process is over."* Vlad commented that he is no longer an immigrant, but simply lives his life. I think that the participants' sense that their immigration is "over" refers to the struggle of adjusting to a new country and re-establishing stability. In that sense, it is complete. They all speak English, interact with Americans, have careers and jobs. Some are involved in intimate relationships, have friends and communities, and are focused more on normal developmental tasks. However, as I will demonstrate below, they continue to change in how they see themselves in relation to American and Russian cultures. I also believe that other life transitions, such as marriage, having children, or moving to another city, will raise unresolved issues around the immigration process and provide an opportunity to work through them.

Another difference in participants' descriptions of immigration process was in their *views on loss and mourning.* Some spoke explicitly about the process of saying good bye, accepting their losses, and letting go. Olga wrote bundles and bundles of letters to her friend in Ukraine in which she gradually said good bye to him. She was also able to let go of the idea of going back there to bring him to the US. Similarly, Vlad gradually let go of his fantasy of getting back together with his ex-girlfriend who lived in Israel. Anna

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

described the process from initial shock and negativism she experienced at the beginning, to passive acceptance of the fact that she was now living in the US, and finally, to an active acceptance and moving on. As I described earlier in this chapter, these participants acknowledged feelings of sadness, depression, or anger related to the immigration process. Considering the focus on these feelings in the literature on loss and mourning, it is not surprising that these participants commented on this process as related to their immigration experience. Although Alex denied any kind of loss, his stages of immigration process also refer to a process of letting go: the illusion of trying to become a part of American society, disappointment and rejection of that society, and finally, peace and acceptance. This description may indicate that the feelings Alex was denying were actually the ones of loss. I could not help but think about seeing his father's white jacket in the airport as his only memory of the day of the departure.

In contrast, others denied any loss or process of dealing with it. Andrei emphasized that looking back only interferes with one's capacity to succeed and described his stages, which focused on work transitions. They involved figuring out a plan, gaining experience, and moving on to the next goal. As noted previously, these strategies reflect who Andrei is and his defensive style. However, Vlad also compared immigration to job transitions. It is possible that those immigrants who have more difficulty with acknowledging and coping with feelings of loss tend to focus more on gaining knowledge and accomplishing goals. In contrast, Masha's stages of immigration process centered around family transitions: depression and anxiety before her first pregnancy, feeling overwhelmed before her parents' arrival to the US, and feeling more stable after her daughter's birth. This focus on family transitions may be related to Masha's dependency

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

needs. Her survival depended on her relationships with her husband, parents, and children.

On a related note, the importance of support and relationships in the participants' immigration process and adjustment deserves special comment. There is widespread agreement that at a time of a significant transition and change like immigration, people certainly benefit from support of others (Akhtar, 1999; Aroian et al, 1996; Birman & Tyler, 1994; Flaherty et al, 1986; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Participants spoke about the importance of help from their extended families, Jewish organizations and community, friends, and fellow immigrants. Olga eloquently described her friendship with a young woman she met in Austria as "two of us in the sea of the unknown." Although Alex consistently spoke about preferring to be alone during difficult times, he spent considerable time socializing with various groups of Russian peers and pursued serious romantic relationships. As I stated before, the special importance participants placed on their peer relations is not surprising given their age and developmental state at the time of departure from the FSU and arrival to the US.

Theme 4: Participants varied in the extent and quality of their current relationship with Russianness and Americanness

One of the most striking findings in the present study is the degree of variability in participants' relationships to American and Russian cultures. Since the word "culture" does not adequately describe the concepts addressed in this study, I will refer to them as Russianness and Americanness. Although many participants came from different republics of the FSU, they commonly spoke of Russia, being a Russian, or having Russian friends. Participants spoke about their love for America and disdain for Americans, having close

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

relationships with Americans and none with Russians, experiencing nostalgic feelings towards Russia and having no interest of going back there. Consistent with the contemporary literature on multidimensional models of acculturation (Birman, 1994), a pattern of dimensions for Russianness and Americanness emerged. There appear to be three separate dimensions for each: relationship to the country, relationship to the people, and ethnic identification. See Table 3 for each participant's responses. It is important to note that this is a snap shot of where the immigrants exist within these dimensions at the present moment. It does not reflect the process of change they experienced over time or possibilities for the future. Although most acculturation models also include behavioral and linguistic components, they seemed unnecessary in this instance. All participants in this study are fluent in both languages and are competent in both cultures.

Table 3: Russianness and Americanness

| Names | Russianness | | | Americanness | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Russia | Russians | R. Identif. | America | Americans | A. Identif. |
| Boris | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some | No |
| Regina | No - city* | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Mark | No - city | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some | Yes |
| Natasha | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Lena | No - city | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some | Yes |
| Olga | No - city | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Masha | No - city | No | No | No | No | No |
| Anna | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Andrei | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some | Yes |
| Vlad | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Alex | No - city | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |

* "City" identifies those participants who reported missing their cities, neighborhoods, and other non-human objects.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

*Relationship to both countries.* In terms of participants' relationships to Russia, only Anna expressed a strong sense of connection to the country, its culture and soul. Considering the forced nature of her immigration, this sentiment is not surprising. Throughout her immigration experience, Anna was always aware of her longing and need for Russian culture and soul. Several participants, including Boris, Natasha, Andrei, and Vlad, reported having no ties to Russia or feelings about it. Although Vlad watches Russian news programs on television and is well informed about events there, he was quite clear about his "forget Rushka" attitude. Andrei always wanted to immigrate and focused on assimilating into American society. Similarly, Natasha also has no interest in Russia or any nostalgic feelings about it. Boris' attitude towards Russia changed after his trip there. It was such a shocking and traumatic experience that he cut off all contacts with people there and has no interest in visiting at the present moment. However, as is evident, many participants spoke about missing their cities and streets, and wishing to see them again. A person's experience of his or her immediate surroundings, such as home, building, street, neighborhood, or city, is quite different from the experience of the nation. The latter is more abstract, while the former has many emotional and cognitive ties attached to it. Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) noted that non-human environment is invested with intense emotional content and comes to represent a significant part of a person's sense of identity. The participants' experiences of missing their non-human environment from Russia is similar to the nostalgic feelings most people have about their childhood homes and origins. It is possible that the four participants who did not report such feelings (Boris, Natasha, Andrei and Vlad) are trying to separate themselves completely from the memories of their

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

past life in the FSU. All participants acknowledged that Russia is a place where they were born and raised and, therefore, it left a mark on them.

In contrast, all but one participant expressed their connection to America. They spoke about their love for America (Vlad and Alex), loyalty to America (Olga), seeing it as their homeland now (Lena and Vlad), or general feeling of belonging to American society (Mark, Natasha, Lena, Andrei). America has become their new home where they developed relationships, built a new life, and see themselves in the future. Masha was the only participant who did not feel that she belonged to American society. This appears to be related both to the forced nature of her immigration and to pre-existing emotional vulnerability.

*Relationship to both peoples.* Most participants consistently reported forming intimate relationships and close friendships with other Russian immigrants. These included friends who moved to the US from their native cities, people met through schools, jobs, or mutual friends. Only Natasha and Masha reported little or no close relationships with other Russians. While Natasha did not seem conflicted about it and simply reported no opportunity or interest in meeting other Russian immigrants, Masha expressed a wish to have the kind of relationships she used to have in Russia. She commented on getting tired of interactions with Russians in the US because of their lack of psychological mindedness. As I explored it in more detail in the write up of her story, Masha's past and present relationships appear to be based on need and dependency, rather than on mutual interaction.

In terms of relationships with Americans, there was more variability among participants. Masha, Vlad, and Alex reported no close or intimate relationships with

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Americans. Similar to her reasons regarding why she has no relationships with Russians, Masha expressed frustration about her inability to connect with Americans, becoming tired from interactions with them, as well as feeling that "they don't want me." Vlad and Alex spoke about cultural and linguistic barriers, as well as expressing a denigration of Americans. These feelings appeared to be related to their personal insecurities and defensive strategies. Four participants (Regina, Natasha, Olga, and Anna) reported having close or intimate relationships with Americans. Regina and Anna are currently involved in intimate relationships with Americans, while Natasha only dates Americans. Olga is married to a Russian immigrant, but has close friendships with Americans or cross-cultural couples. They all seemed to be able to take the words of Harry Stack Sullivan to heart, in that, "We are all much more simply human than otherwise" (1953). While for Natasha this reflects her need for splitting, the other three participants tend to experience greater ambivalence, typical of the Kleinian depressive position. I will elaborate on these concepts in the next chapter. The rest of the participants reported having some relationships with Americans, mostly at the level of acquaintance. These connections developed through schooling, jobs, or interactions with American parents in the context of child rearing.

*Ethnic identification.* In this study, ethnic identification is defined as participants' own sense of being a Russian or an American. In terms of their Russian identification, similar to the extent of relationships with other Russian immigrants, only two participants (Natasha and Masha) did not identify as Russian. Once again, for Natasha it reflected her difficulty in dealing with ambivalent feelings and the need for clear-cut affiliations. She feels that she was simply born in Russia, that is all. For Masha, it was more related to her sense of not belonging anywhere. She spoke about being comfortable in the neutral zone

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of Europe, where she was not a Russian, nor an American. Most participants clearly identified themselves as Russian, having a Russian background, being proud of such a background, and wishing to pass it along to their children. There was a clear desire to preserve the Russian aspects of their identity. Many participants worried about losing fluency in the Russian language. Some had a stronger sense of identification than others. For example, Anna stated that she was "definitely a Russian," while Mark stated that he "will always be a Russian."

What was interesting is the variability among participants in their feelings about the Brighton Beach area and its residents. As I noted previously, the Brighton Beach area is a famous Russian enclave in New York which was used in this study as a projective instrument. For example, while Lena spoke about being proud of her Russian background, she reported feeling embarrassed about Brighton Beach and her sense of discomfort about living in Brooklyn. These feelings were related to her wish "not to be an immigrant." Andrei spoke about feeling irritated. Masha, Alex, and Natasha do not like Brighton Beach, Vlad likes it but does not respect the people who live there, and Anna has very warm feelings towards it. Others reported a gradual process of moving from avoidance and negative feelings about Brighton Beach to acceptance and enjoyment (Regina, Mark, Olga). Brighton Beach area has become a natural projective test. Some participants split off parts of themselves or Russian culture they do not like, and project them onto Brighton Beach. Others were able to move "from hate and love to ambivalence" (Akhtar, 1999).

There was also considerable variation in the participants' American identification. Five participants (Mark, Natasha, Lena, Andrei, and Alex) spoke about feeling as an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

American and being Americanized. Two participants stated unequivocally that they are not American. Anna explained that she feels attached to Russian culture and soul. Regina refuses to identify as an American because she does not "want to belong to a clan." It was consistent with her overall theme of wanting to be herself. Boris, Olga, Masha, and Vlad were less specific about their reasons for not feeling as an American. Interestingly, participants' identifications as an American or a Russian also varied by context. For example, while internally she does not feel as an American, Olga stated that she would identify as an American if she were in trouble abroad. At the same time, many participants identify themselves as Russians in Europe due to the negative bias towards American tourists there.

In sum, participants' relationships to Americanness and Russianness are complex and multi-determined. Considering participants' homogeneity in terms of their demographics, this complexity may seem surprising. Yet, it speaks to the importance of examining these concepts through the lens of each person's internal experience and meaning.

Theme 5: Impact of the immigration process on participants' identity: positive experience at a cost

All participants unequivocally spoke about the positive impact of their immigration experience on who they are today. I originally began the last sentence with "despite their difficulties and struggles..." only to remember that many participants identified these "difficulties and struggles" as the reasons they had changed.

*Self-discovery and self-actualization.* Many participants spoke about the process of self-discovery and becoming who they are because of immigration and their lives in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

US. Winnicott's (1971) concepts of "true and false self," as well as Pine's (1982) idea of the "expansion of the self" are relevant here. The most eloquent voice was Olga who spoke about becoming the person she only imagined herself to be in her novels. She finally had the freedom to express her taste in music and clothes, to study in her desired field, and to speak her mind. This freedom was both related to coming to the US and to her parents' divorce. Regina spoke about being able to be who she is without being labeled. "You have more opportunity to be everything in America. You walk down the street and you can be, you are who you are, who you appear to be." Similarly, Natasha also stated that immigrating provided her with an opportunity to be herself. "I don't think it made me into a different person. [ ] I mean I do more what I want to do than what life would have made me do. I think. I feel better as a person here." She enjoyed the privacy and larger personal space in America. In contrast to the former Soviet Union where young people often follow their parents' footsteps and where the norms of behavior and traditions are quite strict, these immigrants have an opportunity for identity exploration.

*Increased confidence.* All participants spoke about their increased confidence in their abilities and willingness to take risks. As Alex put it, "I believe in myself much more." This increased confidence is the result of experiences of efficacy and success. Each time a participant took a risk or tried something new he or she discovered or confirmed his or her abilities. As Regina stated, "When a person only relies on himself, [ ] some positive and negative qualities are discovered very quickly for himself. And it is very important to always know who you are. I mean, what you are capable of." While in the past they relied on their parents and families for support and social connections, now they had to rely on themselves. Boris put it this way, "Going through that path, surviving it

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and surviving it successfully is sort of a thing that puts everybody who made it into somewhat different league." Anna also emphasized "surviving" immigration and its positive impact on her ability to cope with life. Such a focus on survival was consistent with her overall theme of being "a survivor."

*Increased independence.* Most participants spoke about their increased independence from their parents. It did not matter whether their parents immigrated with them or came later. As Lena stated, "I am proud of myself. That I came here and I was alone, and that I made my way, so to speak, into the world." However, the turning point in her immigration process was when she realized that her father, who was thousands of miles away, did not "know everything." It is a separation and individuation from the internalized parental objects that was more significant for the participants.

*Cost: depression, instability, and harshness.* The positive impact of immigration process came at a price. Some participants experienced increased depression and emotional difficulties (Masha, Lena, Anna, Vlad). Anna and Lena spoke about becoming harsh and numb to protect themselves from being hurt. Both of them described having significant events during their immigration process which they experienced as traumatic. Anna was forced to immigrate, took care of her dying mother, and later on cared for her brother and son on her own. Lena came to the US alone at age 18, had to survive on her own, and went through an abortion. As noted above, many participants described feelings of instability and uncertainty related to immigration experience. While it was part of a normal process of a significant change, this sense of instability and a longing for and efforts to achieve and maintain stability persist.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

On another note, many participants had some difficulty distinguishing between the impact of their immigration experience and general developmental maturation. Although it was not the purpose of this study to answer this question, I would suggest that one has to examine the process of normal developmental changes in the context of a significant transition. For some participants, there was a delay in their developmental trajectory while they were dealing with adjustment issues. For example, Alex eloquently described how he had his "second youth" several years after immigrating. At the same time, for some participants there was a sense of loss, that is, a loss of their childhood.

### 4.3 Jewishness

All participants identified themselves as Jews upon entering the current study. For ten participants, both parents were Jews. Two participants, Masha and Regina, came from families where one parent was Jewish. These two experienced some conflict in dealing with the extended family's anti-Semitism. While this had an impact on their experience of Jewishness, it did not detract from their identification as Jews. Masha stated that she always felt more as a Jew than a Russian and wanted to marry a Jew to be "three-quarters Jewish." Regina's experience of family conflict contributed to her desire to be herself. Due to her mother's mixed background, Olga was recorded as a Cherkess but always considered herself a Jew.

Theme 1: Jewish identity has multiple and coexisting meanings

Consistent with the literature described earlier, participants varied widely in defining their Jewishness. First, most of them spoke about it being such an "essential" and integral part of them, and that it was at times difficult to define it. They commented on it

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

being "a given," something "inside," something you get through the "air," "this feeling" they had, knowing "who I am," "a warm feeling." Jewishness was described by many participants as being similar to how one would describe race: it's a "blood connection," "you have to be born one," something you cannot "hide" or "delete." There is a joke in the Jewish community about having "Jewdar" (read: Jewish radar), an immediate recognition of someone who is also Jewish. As I listened to these descriptions, I could not help but think about centuries of persecution based on facial and body features, as well as cultural attributes.

In terms of the origins of their sense of Jewishness, participants identified two sources: anti-Semitism and family traditions. Most participants reported realizing for the first time that they were Jewish when told or asked by others. Some learned about it in schools where their teachers' journals recorded their nationality or where other students made fun of them or instigated fights. Others learned from neighbors or other adults. For example, they were often asked by strangers or neighbors whether they were Jewish. While some responded affirmatively, others did not understand the question and went to their parents for explanation. Alex said that he realized he was Jewish because of his families attempt to immigrate. Many participants also spoke about their families as the source of positive meaning of their Jewishness. They described celebrating Jewish holidays, eating Jewish food, or listening to Jewish music. However, celebrating Jewish holidays did not involve learning and knowing about Judaism. It was simply about following traditions passed on from generation to generation. Several participants reported that someone in their families spoke Yiddish, which they identified as one of the major markers of Jewishness.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Analysis of the data revealed several dimensions of the participants' Jewish identity. They include: 1) being different; 2) belonging, or identification; 3) background and roots, or ethnicity; 4) knowledge of history and culture; 5) faith and religion; and, 6) Aafective experience.

*Being Different.* One of the first meanings of being Jewish that participants reported was a sense of difference which developed from the interactions with non-Jews described above. Participants knew that they were perceived as "different," "strange," "not equal," "other," or "less than." One could not escape from being identified by the majority as different. In part, it was related to the government policy of defining Jewishness as a nationality and marking it in one's birth certificate, school journals, and passport. However, the studies of Jewish identity in the US or other parts of the world indicate similar findings. For some ethnic or religious groups, being "different" is simply a distinction to identify their belonging to a particular group. For example, a Russian would talk about being different from an Armenian or a Georgian. However, for Russian Jews, being different was more than simply belonging to a group. It referred to a minority status and internal sense of being "less than."

*Belonging.* Almost every participant spoke about belonging as a major meaning of being Jewish. They felt that they belong to a group of people or a nation. Some identified with the survival of the Jewish people and Jewish nation through centuries of persecution. Anna in particular emphasized this aspect of her Jewish identity. She commented on her own survival and connection to that of the Jewish nation. Others focused on belonging to "the best" nation in the world, which produced many talented and outstanding personalities. For example, Andrei and Vlad, the two participants who tended to use

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

grandiose defenses against feelings of inferiority, spoke about feeling privileged to belong to the "chosen people." Olga and Masha stated that being Jewish was also about family and a sense of togetherness. I believe that this is an another expression of the feeling of belonging. The participants' sense of belonging provided them with a feeling of connection and community. Andrei and Alex became very active in their Jewish communities prior to immigration. For Andrei, the focus was on social interactions and learning about Jewish history. For Alex, it provided an opportunity to learn about Judaism, begin practicing, and connect with other immigrants who were planning to immigrate. This sense of belonging also applied to American Jewry, as many participants said that among Americans they felt closer to American Jews.

*Background and roots.* Most participants spoke about their Jewishness as their background, the place they come from. They called it "nationality," "ethnicity," or "roots." The only participant who denied any other meanings of Jewishness, Natasha, did speak about it being her "background and ethnicity." This meaning is consistent with the fact that Soviet Jews were defined by the state according to their parents' nationality. The Jewish background included culture and traditions, ancestry and history. It also included the history of the Holocaust and survival. This notion of survival appears to connect the participants Jewishness and immigration experience. As noted in the previous section on immigration, many participants spoke about "surviving immigration" and their increased confidence as a result. Anna also spoke about her sense of responsibility for continuing the Jewish nation by marrying a Jew and raising her children Jewish. This desire was related both to her personal dynamic of being responsible for everything in her life and to the history of Jewish survival in the Holocaust. Most participants stated that they want to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

preserve their Jewish heritage and want their children to know what it means to be Jewish. The dimension of background and roots is closely linked with the participants' knowledge about this background. Identification with Jewish people or the Jewish nation also includes an historical identity of Jews as a group.

*Knowledge.* Many participants spoke about their knowledge of history and culture as an important aspect of their Jewishness. In their adolescence and young adulthood, especially after immigrating, they began reading and learning about Jewish history, Judaism, and Judaic traditions. It provided context to things they observed or experienced in their families and communities. As Boris stated, "It's tradition that you people have lived with for thousands of years and it's certainly worth studying and knowing." This dimension of the Jewish identity could also be referred to as cognitive, in contrast to the next dimension of affect. One's knowledge about his or her background and roots is necessary for the emotional connection of Jewishness. Moreover, the converse is also true: one's affect about Jewishness demonstrates the depth of identification as measured by what the person is prepared to do

*Affect.* I previously quoted Freud's comments about being a Jew. For him, being Jewish had to do with "obscure emotional forces which were the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words." Many participants would have agreed with Freud as it was clear that all of them had an emotional attachment to their Jewishness. The feelings they described were both positive and negative. This was consistent with literature that postulates that historically Jewish identity had been accompanied by conflicts and tensions. The positive feelings included pride, warmth, and patriotism. The participants spoke about feeling good and proud to belong to a great nation. "Feeling good" described by

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

some participants was not easily explained. As I describe above, it was simply an ill-defined yet powerful inner sense. As Masha stated, "It's just my feeling." When the father of her son wanted to baptize him, Anna experienced a "visceral" negative reaction. I believe these positive feelings originated in good experiences with their parents and grandparents who passed on their own emotional attachment to Jewishness. In addition, those participants who grew up in Jewish-dominated communities benefited from the community support. These positive feelings served as a buffer against anti-Semitism and prejudice all participants inevitably experienced. Andrei and Alex stated that they felt the most Jewish when witnessing unfairness or threats to the Jewish community. Similarly, Vlad and Mark spoke about their patriotism for the Jewish nation. However, it is important to note that at times the participants' positive feelings bordered on grandiosity and superiority (Vlad, Andrei). The latter appear to be an exaggerated defense against feeling inferior and different.

The negative feelings associated with Jewishness described in this study were humiliation, fear, resentment, and pain. Natasha was the only participant who stated that being Jewish means "nothing." As I noted in the write-up of her story, her overarching theme of trying to "fit it and not to stand out" was directly related to early experiences with anti-Semitism. In contrast to Masha, who insisted on being recorded in teachers' journals as a "Jew" (in spite of her fifth line being "Russian), Natasha wanted to change it to "Russian." She felt embarrassed to be identified as someone "different and other." Anna, who experienced physical torture because of her Jewishness, spoke about her sense of pain as related to the history of the Holocaust and survival of the Jewish nation. Some participants experienced feelings of fear and anxiety originating in their parents

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

precautions against anti-Semitism. In general, a positive affective connection to one's Jewishness overweighed the negative experiences for most participants.

*Faith and religion.* Only a few participants reported any kind of religiosity before immigration. Some knew that their family members secretly attended synagogues or religious services under the Soviet regime. Others began learning about it during perestroika when the government became more tolerant towards religion. For example, Lena attended Jewish classes held by an American rabbi and his wife. Upon their immigration to the US, many participants became more interested in religion. Lena, who studied in a yeshiva, continues to observe certain rituals and describes her faith in God as one of the important aspects of her survival in the US. Similarly, Anna became more religious and spoke about Judaism and Jewishness as providing her with a sense of "stability" and "ground."

Participants were clear about the multiple meanings of their Jewishness. They were also clear that it was an important part of who they are. While Jewishness did not define their identity, it could not be separated from it. It is important to note that for most participants, being Jewish was intimately connected to being Russian. When asked about their ethnicity, most of them identify themselves as "Russian Jews." It was evident that for some participants their Jewish identity was more conflictual than for others.

Theme 2: Participants varied in ways of responding to anti-Semitism and feeling different

Lax and Richards (1981) indicated that the ambivalent feeling stirred up around being Jewish can be dealt with defensively or resolved in a manner that will not interfere with personal growth. The analysis of the participants' narratives revealed multiple ways

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in which they dealt with such feelings. There were also some developmental shifts evident in their defensive strategies.

As children, many participants reported that they first attempted either to hide their Jewishness or de-emphasize it in their attempts to fit in and be accepted by their peers. "I always tried to make sure that I was *one of them*. I mean I sort of *denied* that I was a Jew. And I tried to be friends with non-Jews, with all other *kids in the class*, but it didn't help, because they all knew about it" Lena said. Others described a similar experience of not being able to hide their Jewishness and beginning to fight the prejudice. They fought physically and verbally, defended themselves and others, or tried to convince those who were against them. There is a sense of anger and resentment which is put into action. For example, in response to an attack on her brother, Anna broke someone's arm. She commented that it was easier for her to defend someone else than herself. Masha always expressed her feelings about anti-Semitism. Cross (1978) describes this stage of heightened awareness and assertiveness of one's racial or ethnic identity as a stage of Immersion. While some participants aggressively defended their identity from the very beginning (Vlad, Masha), others became more assertive in their adolescence. Over time, many participants internalized a positive Jewish identity. They made more mature choices about when and with whom to stand up for their Jewishness.

For Natasha, the defensive reaction of denial and rejection of her Jewish identity became more persistent. She grew up in an environment that did not provide or strongly encourage positive aspects of Jewishness. However, Natasha commented that her brother was much more "Jewish oriented" than she was. This supports my analysis that her overall theme of trying to "be myself, to fit in and not to stand out" included her

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

apprehension in embracing her Jewishness. While Regina's overall theme was somewhat similar, "to be myself," her response to anti-Semitism and persecution was different. She emphasized that Jewishness is "very important" to her. However, it does not define who she is, it is just a part of her. Alex described similar feelings. He stated that, while in the past observing Judaism and knowing about Jewish traditions and customs was extremely important to him, now Jewishness is just a part of him.

As I noted above, some participants' positive feelings about their Jewishness had a quality of grandiosity and superiority. Andrei, Vlad, and Alex were three participants who are included in this category. Alex stated, "You have to stand out, you have to be better than others in order to achieve something, in order to become equal, you have to be higher, above." I would argue that they are still in the process of resolving conflicting feelings of shame and pride. They need this grandiose defense to cope with feelings of inferiority. This strategy was consistent with their general approach to life.

Theme 3: Immigration had an impact on participants' Jewish identity

Most participants commented on some degree of impact their immigration to the US had on their Jewishness. Sometimes it began even before immigration. For example, Alex, Lena, and Andrei became increasingly involved with their Jewish communities prior to immigrating. It was both related to increased freedom of religious and ethnic expression in the FSU and to their desire to immigrate. I believe that the reality of immigrating as Jewish refugees contributed to the participants' interest in exploring the meaning of Jewishness.

Upon immigrating, participants were faced with the different viewpoints of American Jews and American society on the meaning of Jewishness in contrast to their

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

own. Suddenly, the concept that did not require an explanation and definition was questioned. The participants found themselves explaining again and again that being Jewish does not refer only to religion. There was a sense of resentment and annoyance in their stories. Throughout participants' stories, the notion of being "more" or "less" Jewish appeared. It seemed to originate in their interactions with American Jewry and other immigrants. Before their arrival to the US, the participants distinguished between "full Jews," "half Jews," "quarter Jews," and "Jews in hiding." This was mostly based on one's parents' identification (fifth line). Upon their arrival to the US, many participants spoke about their sense that they were not "Jewish enough." They felt that there was an expectation from American Jews that Russian immigrants would become observant and more interested in religion. In response, some immigrants resisted any attempts to change their views. Others did become more interested in Jewish history, culture, and religion. This appeared to be related to the participants' positive experiences with American Jews. For example, Anna felt supported by the Jewish community in the Southwest during her mother's illness and process of dying. Vlad spoke about an American Jew who helped him get a better job. While there was a mutual disappointment between Russian and American Jews, the Jewishness could nevertheless serve as a bridge between Russian and American Jews.

As noted above, many participants became more knowledgeable about Judaism and sometimes became more observant. This is consistent with the literature which indicates that the number of Russian Jewish immigrants in the US who adhere to Judaism has increased and that Judaism becomes more attractive the longer immigrants have been in the US (Kliger, 2000). Some participants in the present study celebrate major Jewish

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

holidays, sometimes observe Shabbat, attend synagogue, and volunteer their time for Jewish charities. In terms of patterns of who becomes more observant and who does not, I believe that several factors were present. Those participants who had positive early family experiences with Judaism and/or who had positive interactions with American Jews were more likely to become more observant and interested in religion. In addition, when asked about their preferences in terms of Judaic movements, several participants expressed preference for the Conservative movement. They felt as outsiders among Hasidic and Orthodox Jews, yet did not feel that the Reformed movement was "serious" enough for them.

As one would expect, the Jewish identity of Russian immigrants had been affected by their immigration experience. Once again, the changes in the participants' Jewishness were also affected by normal developmental shifts. Some participants reported increased exploration of their Jewish identity at times of their marriage or when they had children. However, immigration was another major life transition that lead to such exploration.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Chapter 5

# Discussion:
# Toward a better understanding of the immigration process and Jewish identity.

This study has elaborated an empirical and theoretical analysis of the participants' experiences of the immigration process and their Jewish identity. Chapter 4 provided a summary of the issues that help us better understand immigration as a process, as well as the participants' subjective experiences of their Jewishness. In this chapter, several theoretical issues related to these findings will be discussed. In parallel with the presentation in the previous chapter, the Discussion will be separated into two sections: Immigration Experience and Jewishness.

## 5.1 Immigration Experience

In this section, I will elaborate on the understanding of the immigration experience as it relates to three theoretical questions: 1) Does the immigration experience challenge one's sense of self? If so, what is the character of the challenge and what is its impact on the participants sense of selfhood?; 2) How do immigrants meet the challenge that immigration presents to their sense of self?; and, 3) How can we understand immigrants' relationships to Americanness and Russianness from the dynamic perspective?

**<u>Discussion 1:</u> Does the immigration experience challenge one's sense of self? If so, what is the character of the challenge and what is its impact on the participants sense of selfhood?**

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Many participants in this study described experiences during their immigration process which Erikson (1964) referred to as "uprootedness," moments of not knowing or not feeling known. Whether it was Andrei's confusion about automatic doors in a supermarket, or Vlad's sense that he was judged only by the kind of car he drove, immigrants in this study spoke about feeling out of place at some point during this process. Alex stated, "Most people, especially young generation, have depression, feel bad because they are pulled out with their roots and have to find friends and everything is strange and unfamiliar." Zaborowski (1999) described similar perceptions among Brazilian immigrants and defined them as "experiences of strangeness." Most immigrants in the present study described adjustment difficulties, struggles to learn the new language and new environment, feelings of sadness and depression, and loneliness. Moreover, the metaphors they used to describe this process were quite powerful: "breaking bones," "ligaments cut," "thrown into the water," "cut off," or "death." At the same time, there was a clear sense of accomplishment and pride. Only two participants, Masha and Anna, spoke about their immigration experience as being "traumatic." As I noted in the write-ups of their stories, they both had pre-existing emotional vulnerabilities and were both forced to immigrate against their will. I believe these two factors are primarily responsible for their experience of immigration as traumatic.

There is no question that immigration was a significant and challenging experience for all participants. If one sees culture as another object (de Vryer, 1989; Gehrie, 1979; Levy-Warren, 1987) to which one forms an emotional attachment, leaving one culture and adapting to a new one raises a number of contradictions and incongruities. One's old image of him or herself as a competent member of a society is challenged by the new self-

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

image: a newly arrived immigrant who cannot pick up the phone without sweating and having an anxiety attack, or who feels completely lost at a supermarket when asked a question by a clerk. Although Garza-Guerrero (1974) defined immigration as a "violent shock," he also distinguished between pathological and normal experiences of migration. While the pathological experience involves unresolved identity crisis, depression, and chronic social maladaptation, the normal developmental experience of migration involves a sense of uneasiness about one's identity.

I believe that Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) and those who agree with them use the term "trauma" to describe only one subset of experiences. It refers not to the experience itself, but rather to the quality of one's reaction to it. It speaks to *how* an immigrant may experience it. Grinberg and Grinberg acknowledge that a predisposition is important in studying one's response to traumatic situations. I would rephrase this and say that "predisposition and actual *or* perceived lack of control may be responsible for a person's experiencing immigration as a traumatic situation." I would argue that feelings of disorganization, pain, and frustration are experienced by all human beings. Those experiences, however, do not necessarily imply "trauma." Like many others, Grinberg and Grinberg base their theory and descriptions on their psychoanalytic work with immigrants in treatment. Rather than seeing immigration as trauma and a threat to one's identity, the concept of *challenge* is more appropriate. A challenge may present a momentary threat to one's identity, but the opportunities for mastery are more evident than they would be in the midst of a full-blown trauma. Those who experience and describe trauma have a sense that there is no hope or way out. In contrast, most participants in this study focused on overcoming obstacles and the opportunity to create a better life for themselves.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Another powerful metaphor used by the participants was that of immigration as a process of "survival." Yet, it was not simply a notion of staying alive. Rather, there was a sense of emerging changed, renewed, or matured after a challenging experience. Some of the participants initiated the immigration process hoping for such change. For others, it happened unintentionally. Anna applied her overall theme of survival to her immigration process as well. She used the metaphor of the Phoenix, an ancient bird who burns itself and comes back to life every 500 years. Anna insisted that the Phoenix comes back to life changed. In terms of the immigration process, the changes described by the participants involved increased confidence in one's abilities, actualizing one's dreams and true self, and increased independence. These findings were consistent with the research of Yeh (1976) and Zaborowski (1999) who described the positive outcomes of one's immigration process: a more objective self-realization, greater flexibility and tolerance for change, reconnection with one's true self, increased courage, and personal growth. Moreover, Zaborowski postulates that "the subjective experiences of one's migratory process configured a paradox: the opportunity for enrichment (in-dwelling) was taken and achieved *because* conflict and environmental intrusions were experienced" (p. 156, emphasis by the author).

Rather than defining this process of personal change as identity transformation, Pine's (1982) concept of the expansion of the self may be more appropriate. This is a process of experiencing new events and new behaviors as parts of the self and it occurs in immigrants' lives through the experiences of efficacy and success while overcoming fear and discomfort. Pine emphasized the importance of repetition in gaining mastery. Earlier in this manuscript I compared identity change to the practice of yoga: through continuous

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

repetition small changes in my body allow me one day to take a posture that used to feel unreachable. Similarly, as I began my work on this project, it seemed insurmountable. As I wrote page after page of this manuscript and submitted it for multiple reviews, over time I began to believe in my ability to not only finish it, but to offer some insights about the immigration process and Jewish identity. As immigrants take risks, try new things, and succeed, they are more willing to try again. Over time, such experiences of confidence and independence "become familiar, part of the experiential self" (Pine, 1982, p. 161). While the word "expansion" is defined by quantitative changes in something, Pine's concept refers both to quantitative and qualitative changes of the object that fundamentally remains the same. One may say that quantitative changes over time would set the stage for qualitative change. As Mark takes risks, succeeds, and gradually begins to feel more confident, his sense of himself as passive and dependent may change.

It is important to note that many participants insisted that they did not change, but rather matured or actualized themselves. Natasha put it eloquently, "I don't think it made me into a different person. I think it gave me the opportunity to be who maybe I wanted to be." Regina described her dreams upon her arrival to the US which revealed her desire to preserve her "soul," to keep important aspects of herself alive. Akhtar (1999) compared identity development to the growth of a tree. While the shape and a central core remain the same and recognizable over the years, new rings accumulate around it. All participants' immigration narratives revealed the importance of persistent sameness and continuity as an expression of one's personal identity (Akhtar, 1999; Erikson, 1959, 1987). For some, it seemed more essential than for others. For example, Andrei's narrative could be viewed as a story of "rebuilding a castle" (Volynskaya, 2002, personal

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

communication). It reminded me of an Irish restaurant in New York in which the complete interior has been relocated from Ireland and rebuilt here. Andrei brought all the "internal bricks" with him and rebuilt his life, insisting that he did not change. In a sense, he did not "change" by becoming a new person. Rather, to use the metaphor of a castle, he made improvements on the existing structure. I will elaborate on the issues of change and continuity in the next discussion.

Smith (1990) examined changing self-conceptions through two longitudinal studies of life transitions: going to college and motherhood. He found that during their first year at college, students showed a convergence of current and previous selves with retrospective expectation of having moved away from the "self as a child." In his second study, Smith argued that mothers' self-conceptions changed through pregnancy and that women actively engaged in self-construction. He concluded that "during pregnancy and the transition to motherhood, women renegotiate a position in their social world" (1990, p. 372). The longitudinal nature of the study allowed the author to observe how self-reflections and retrospection leads to reconstruction - "a changing presentation of the previous self-concept" (p. 378). He believed that this reconstruction is motivated by two related factors: a need to create order from disorder and a need to present coherent and positive narratives of the self. In the present study I speculated that certain reflections about the participants' immigration process may have represented a similar process of "re-writing one's story" to make it ego-syntonic. Furthermore, I agree with Smith who argued that the continuity of the self is not a given, but rather, together with discontinuity or change, is actively constructed by the individual when reflecting on his or her life. Mason-Schrock (1996) who conducted a study on transsexuals' narrative construction of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the 'true self' agrees, "To maintain a sense of wholeness and continuity, we must revise, edit, and sometimes completely rewrite our 'true stories.'" Further research using longitudinal methodology is needed provide empirical evidence of such a process of narrative reconstruction during the immigration process. The use of archival materials, such as letters or diaries, to investigate this process would be beneficial to the field.

**Discussion 2: How did these Russian Jews meet the challenge that immigration presented to their sense of self? In particular, in this section I will be concerned with exploring the character of the psychological defenses that were activated by the challenge.**

Before I began interviewing immigrants for this study, I spoke with my friends, family members, and other immigrants I knew. One of these conversations was with Volodya Druk, a Russian psychologist, poet and inventor, who immigrated to the US at around the same time as I did. When asked how things changed for him over time, Volodya used the metaphor of "re-creating a corner."

> The city becomes yours when you do six things: you pee on the corner; you kiss on the corner; you have a fight on the corner; you have a drink with a friend on the corner, you have a talk with a friend on the corner; and you leave it and come back. (Druk, 2000, personal communication).

"The corner" is a metaphorical physical and internal space of belonging and comfort that an immigrant had previously and tries to recreate in the new land.

Immigration as a gradual process of re-establishing stability

In the previous chapter I described several important aspects of the immigration process reflected upon by the participants in the present study. Rather than looking at

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigration as a distinct moment in time, they spoke about a gradual process. Some were able to identify distinct stages, while others focused on moments of awareness that something had changed. One of the major findings was the description of immigration for this group of immigrants as a *process of re-establishing stability*. The first step in this process was learning the new language and environment. The participants focused on their goals for the future: What am I going to do? How am I going to achieve what I came here for? According to Akhtar (1999), such a future orientation is typical for exiles who cannot return home and, therefore, are full of hatred and the need to split off the old world. I believe that the focus on the future for my participants did not necessarily imply hatred and splitting. Rather, it is an important strategy without which an immigrant would fail in the process of learning the new environment. Re-establishing one's sense of stability also involved recreating community and regaining one's place in a society.

This group of immigrants showed a special emphasis on developing intimate relationships and a peer group immediately after immigration. In general, the participants belonged to what Erikson (1959) would define as the stage of resolving the developmental crisis of Intimacy and Solidarity versus Isolation. The results of the current study were consistent with Erikson's theory. Participants focused their goals on their careers, dating and marriage, intimacy, and friendships. However, the immigration process may have at first interfered or slowed down the normal developmental trajectory. Most participants had to regain financial stability, learn English and the customs of this society, and get back on their feet. Alex spoke about losing his youth to this process and trying to reclaim it several years later. These findings are consistent with developmental theory which indicates that various transitions and stressors, such as an illness or loss of spouse, may

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

delay or accelerate normal developmental processes (Cytrynbaum, 1995, personal communication). For example, Anna spoke about "growing up too fast" as she took care of her dying mother at age 22. Myself and other clinicians working with immigrants observe similar dynamics in the elderly. Rather than focusing on resolving the crisis of Integrity versus Despair they are often forced to work and take care of their grandchildren as their own children struggle to establish themselves.

Process of letting go and decathecting

Concurrent with re-establishing stability, another process was evident in some participants' narratives. I would define it as the *process of letting go and decathecting* from internal objects. I distinguish this process from the process of loss and mourning typically described in the psychoanalytic literature as it relates to immigration (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Levy-Warren, 1987). As I noted in the literature review, Grinberg and Grinberg believed that in order for an immigrant to integrate his or her native culture into the new one without having to denounce either one, he or she must resolve their mourning for the native country. They state that the mourning process is protracted and includes both mourning for the lost object and for the lost aspects of the self. Yaglom (1993) went further to stipulate that Soviet immigrants in general have difficulties in dealing with loss and mourning due to the culturally acquired inhibitions of mourning. She continues to say that they become fixated sometimes for long periods of time at different stages of the mourning process, which leads to difficulties in adaptation. Such an overgeneralization disregards the diversity of actual experience and individual differences.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In the literature on loss there is a distinction made between normal and pathological response to a loss. Freud (1947) and Klein (1940) differentiate between normal mourning and pathological melancholia. "In morning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (Freud, 1947, p. 40). Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) applied this theory to the process of immigration as described above. Following Freud, Levy-Warren (1987) distinguishes between culture loss and culture shock as one mourns the loss of native culture during immigration. Levy-Warren states, "It is critical, however, to distinguish between entering a new culture and experiencing an internal ego impoverishment, here denoted as culture 'shock,' and entering a new culture and experiencing an impoverishment in the external world, here denoted as culture 'loss.'" (p. 306). The focus of the distinction in both cases is on internal versus external impoverishment. To apply this line of thinking to the data in the present study, Masha and Anna are the two participants who used metaphors of "death" and "shock" to describe their initial experiences upon arrival to the US.

> It's a shock and a feeling that you don't want to do anything, you don't want to be here, you don't want to live. Next is that it's *OK*. I am already here. There is nothing you can do, there is no way back. And melancholia starts, you know? But not an aggressive one, you know, not aggressive negativism, but passive melancholia. (Anna, see full quote on p. 217)

Olga and Regina, on the other hand, spoke about sadness, saying goodbye, and letting go of their past.

> Practically, you are writing a letter, or you talk on the phone. And you are getting further away every time. A little less, a little more *personal*, a little-little-little-little, so it's not painful for the person. [ ] You know, it's like you are saving yourself somehow. *Defense mechanism* is working like, you know, on every step. (Olga, see full quote on p. 171)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The remainder of the participants did not describe such processes. What then does this mean? First, as I stated previously, this is a retrospective study and, therefore, it is difficult to state with confidence that they did not experience such dynamics earlier on. Second, the age of the participants interviewed in this study and their active desire to immigrate may account for the lack of such descriptions in their narratives.

Returning to my original comment, the relationship between the process of letting go and the process of mourning is not mutual. I agree with others who indicate that the process of mourning involves letting go of and decathecting from internalized objects. However, letting go and decathecting in the process of immigration observed in many participants in this study did not necessarily involve mourning. In my analysis of Olga's story I discussed her description of internal change from homesickness to nostalgia. One of the immigrants in Zaborowski's study (1999) described a similar experience:

> In the beginning it was this longing for everybody and everything that I left in Brazil. [ ] Now I still miss people and places but it is a good feeling, it brings back some good old memories. [...] The difference is that nowadays it doesn't hurt me anymore to remember them (p. 123).

It seems to me that the concept of mourning involves more significant emotional suffering and pain, while letting go may involve discomfort, confusion, and experiences of strangeness described earlier. I believe that both mourning and melancholia, as described in psychoanalytic literature, imply some lack of control over the loss. As most participants in this study not only wanted to immigrate, but actively pursued this path, they exhibited a sense of agency and control over this experience. Nonetheless, given their developmental status at the time of immigration and the pressure to depart, the participants were not fully aware of what they were leaving. The unintended and, therefore, unrecognized,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

consequences of leaving may give rise to a sense of loss but only after there is an eventual realization. That loss can be beneficially mourned or defended against. Regina and Olga are the two participants who most clearly exemplify the process of mourning the unintended and unrecognized losses of the immigration process. On the other hand, Andrei and Alex are the two participants who defended against mourning such losses. As noted above, Andrei had the most difficulty acknowledging changes in his sense of self as a result of his immigration experience. It is possible that an immigrant's capacity to acknowledge these losses and let them go is related to his or her ability to allow for identity change. For example, Andrei insisted that he did not experience any loss and that he did not change. In contrast, Regina struggled throughout her immigration experience to mourn the loss of her country and her identity as an actress. She reflected on the extent of her maturation and personal change through this experience.

Identity and its impact on the process of negotiating the immigration experience

The literature on immigration and psychological functioning describes typical affective experiences and defenses engaged in coping (Akhtar, 1999; de Vryer, 1989; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Yaglom, 1993). Grinberg and Grinberg describe mania, depression, paranoia, confusion, nostalgia, isolation, and apathy as some of the reactions upon immigrating. They write about splitting, dissociation, denial, and hypomanic responses as the typical defenses used by immigrants to cope with the internal turmoil. Yet, what remained unclear was why one immigrant predominantly uses splitting, while another is engaged in denial, and whether every immigrant has specific affective experiences related to immigration.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The data in the present study revealed a multiplicity of affective experiences reported by participants, including sadness, uncertainty, fear, loneliness, excitement, embarrassment, anger, depression, and nostalgia. Some of these feelings were found among most participants, such as uncertainty and fear of the unknown, loneliness and need for connection, and nostalgia about cities and objects in Russia. This was consistent with research and theoretical literature which indicates that such affects are universal experiences associated with a significant change in one's life, not only with immigration. For example, Zaborowski (1999) identified five major categories of subjective experiences of Brazilian immigrants in their process of "uprooting and taking roots." They included boldness, longing-fond remembrance, fear, shame, and enjoyment.

Although she did not pursue a psychological evaluation of each subject, Zaborowski noted several defensive mechanisms throughout the migrants' descriptions of their experiences, including repression, dissociation, displacement, projection, introjection, and sublimation. She concluded that "no defensive style seemed particularly specific to the migratory experiences" (p. 149). The present study revealed several patterns of defensive styles related to emotions reported by participants. Those participants who experienced mixed feelings of joy and sadness were able to use their positive feelings, which at times had a manic quality, to help them cope with negative affects. Immigrants who reported persistent feelings of anger appeared to remain vulnerable for depression. Feelings of embarrassment or inferiority appeared to be associated in each case with a defensive style of using splitting. Similarly, those participants who denied any negative feelings used a similar defensive style and generally preferred to focus on thoughts, rather than feelings. Let us consider Kleinian notions of paranoid-schizoid and depressive

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

positions described in Chapter 1. They are defined as specific configurations of object relations, anxieties, and defenses which persist throughout a person's life (Klein, 1935; Segal, 1973). The way participants dealt with anxieties of this significant change in their lives could be seen as related to their dominant position. From this perspective, for some participants to engage in splitting (i.e. the paranoid-schizoid defense) would indicate an appropriate shift from a general depressive stance in order to survive. It is believed that in some instances the state of the depressive position and defenses involved may actually interfere with healthy functioning.

These patterns, as well as an in-depth analysis of each participant indicated a close relationship between the dominating affects they reported and their general defensive style and identity. To restate, the way participants approached negotiating the immigration experience was *consistent with their identity, or overall approach to life*. While each person's write-up provides a detailed account of my analysis of this dynamic, Appendix F affords an easy glance at all themes for the participants and the interplay between each person's overall theme and the themes that emerged from the stories about their immigration experience. For example, while three participants emphasized the importance of "being myself," the quality and the expression of such a desire varied according to their identity. Regina's love for New York and satisfaction with her life in the US was consistent with her wish and efforts "to be myself." Natasha was more concerned about fitting in. Living in the US provided her with the kind of privacy and emotional distance she needed. Lena's emphasis on "being myself and fitting in" applied to her immigration process as well. In order to feel at home in the US, she needed to be "one of them," i.e. an American. Mark's utilized his overall passive defensive style in negotiating the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

immigration experience: he followed other people's advice and direction. Andrei approached immigration as everything else in his life: rationally and logically.

Pine (1982), in his work on the expansion of the self, stated that our attitudes, feelings, and actions toward new phenomena express our general mode of functioning. A person's response to the immigration process cannot be taken out of context of who he or she is. To the extent that psychological defenses are ego defenses and are activated by the ego to cope with overwhelming affects, their activation is an act of agency and would reflect the defensive style an immigrant had prior to immigration. As I noted previously, agency is seen as the aspect of the self that both expresses and protects the self as an object ("Who I am"). In other words, psychological defenses used by participants in this study to cope with the difficulties inherent in the immigration process are both an expression of who they are and the mechanisms engaged in protecting who they are.

In sum, the results of this study revealed two major aspects of the immigration experience for these participants: the importance of continuity, and changes in one's sense of self. The immigration process with its experiences of uprootedness presented a challenge to the participants, a challenge that allowed for the opportunity to develop and grow. This challenge magnified the two dimensions of identity present in all of us: one that preserves the continuity of self over time and one that is available for the possibility of change. These two dimensions are in constant tension and require a person to engage his or her psychological defenses in order to maintain a sense of equilibrium.

**Discussion 3: From the dynamic perspective, how can we understand immigrants' relationships to Americanness and Russianness?**

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The results of the current study revealed the complex nature of the participants' relationships to Americanness and Russianness. The interview narratives showed a pattern of three dimensions of each concept: relationship to each country, relationship to both peoples, and ethnic identification. There was great variability in each person's experience with Russianness and Americanness. Although the focus of the examination was on the present moment, the participants' stories indicated some changes in their individual location on these dimensions over time. For example, while a participant may have cheered for Russian athletes immediately upon his arrival, more recently he may have felt more emotionally invested in an American sporting victory. Mark only recently began to consider dating an American, while Regina first dated a man of Black and German heritage, then another Russian immigrant, and then married an American Jew. I would also suggest that some narratives indicated the presence of internal conflicts on these dimensions, both conscious and unconscious. For example, Andrei presented himself as someone who "takes the best of two cultures," is quite Americanized, and speaks great English. At the same time he married a Russian immigrant who speaks with a thick accent and has no American friends, and lives in a predominantly Russian-populated area. He did not seem to have any awareness of such discrepancies.

Akhtar's model of four tracks of identity transformation

Earlier I described Akhtar's theoretical and clinical insights in more detail (1995, 1999). To reiterate briefly, he postulated that there were four dimensions (strands or tracks) of identity transformation along which immigrants move. They include the dimension of drive and affect (from love or hate to ambivalence), interpersonal and psychic space (from near or far to optimal distance), temporality (from past or future to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

present), and social affiliation (from mine or theirs to ours). As immigrants negotiate these movements, they accomplish the goal of integrating the old and new cultures. As I analyzed each narrative, there were many times when this model was applicable and helpful in terms of the participants' relationships to Russianness and Americanness.

The most applicable dimension was social affiliation. Akhtar focuses on an immigrant's ability to move toward "we-ness" and develop "cultural mutuality" (1999, p. 97). He described two mediums in which this occurs: filling in of the transitional area with local culture and progressive alteration of the immigrant's superego. While there was no evidence of the latter in the data, the former was quite present. Many participants spoke about the gradual process of learning American pop culture which became the source of enjoyable interactions with Americans. Akhtar also writes about the importance of language in the development of the sense of "we-ness." Although some participants felt quite comfortable in using English, others continued the express concerns about "language" barriers. In his description of the dimension of social affiliation, Akhtar did not emphasize relationships with people of either culture. While discussing the external achievement of a synthesis of two self-representation as the sign of movement along the dimension of affect and drive, he commented on a mixed guest list for dinner and increasing comfort in associating with individuals from the two cultures. It seems to me that these aspects of the identity change should belong to the dimension of social affiliation.

Similarly, the strand of interpersonal and psychic space also appeared applicable in the present study. Immigrants varied greatly on the dimension of the relationship to both the US and Russia. Some expressed affection towards both countries, while others

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

emphasized one or the other. Several participants identified themselves as both Russian and American. According to Akhtar, this would mean the movement toward an optimal distance internally between an immigrant's two self-representations. Alex described the difficult process of accepting his new self, "an Americanized" self. However, while he identifies himself as an American and loves America as a country, Alex has no relationships with Americans.

Akhtar (1999) acknowledged that these dimensions are neither independent of each other nor comprehensive, that the identity change continues throughout one's life, and the emerging identity may be a flexible set of several self-representations, rather than a solid hybrid entity. First, I would like to address the dimension of affect and drive. It seems that rather than separating affect into a separate strand, it is a phenomenon that defines all other dimensions. The only way we know whether someone is moving "from mine or theirs to ours" or "from far or near to optimal distance" is by the immigrant's emotional investment and expression. According to this model, Natasha's indifference towards Russia and enjoyment of greater personal space in the US would indicate the predominance of the experience of "near." Lena's desire to be "one of them" and her emotional investment in this goal would indicate the movement towards "ours" on the dimension of social affiliation.

Second, the data in the present study did not seem to provide any examples of the dimension of temporality. I believe that this may be related in part to the number of years the participants have been in the US. It is possible that earlier during their adjustment process, the notions of past or future may have been more present. The absence of these notions in the narratives may also be related to the participants' age. In my clinical

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

experience with elderly immigrants, as well as in my interactions with elderly family members and social acquaintances, I frequently encounter "if only" fantasies and reminiscences about the past.

Third, the issue of integration of Russianness and Americanness as the ultimate goal is debatable. What, I think, is more important is an immigrant's ability to make choices that are appropriate to the context of his or her life and that fit his or her identity at the time. Predictably, the higher degree of flexibility an immigrant can maintain, while making these choices, will probably result in better mental health. Anna was very clear in her "need" to be close to the Russian community. Andrei chose to immigrate to an area with few Russian immigrants in order to "assimilate," i.e. learn English and American culture as quickly as possible. Later on, he moved to New York to reconnect with Russian culture. In contrast, Masha's goal was to "integrate with Americans," but she was unable to achieve it, and therefore, feels marginalized. Although I did not interview any Russian immigrants who manifested Akhtar's outcome reflecting "ethnocentric withdrawal," I would speculate that there are young immigrants living in the Brighton Beach area for whom it is a wise and appropriate choice. Rather than establishing a general goal of integration, I would suggest that an immigrant's overall identity, well being, and the context of his or her life are taken into consideration. Let us take Natasha as an example. Her assimilation to American culture with almost complete separation of Russianness is driven by her inner need not to stand out and have greater personal space. The interview revealed no sense of discomfort or conflict in regard to this issue. Natasha is mostly satisfied with her life and functions well. In her case, the goal of assimilation was the most appropriate one. Had she been living and working in a highly Russian-

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dominated environment and without a choice about moving, it most probably would cause in her a sense of dissatisfaction and some tension regarding this issue. If Natasha sought treatment at that time, a goal of integrating split off parts of her self may be appropriate.

Rather than placing people within categories, Akhtar's model reflects the flexibility and dynamic nature of the relationship between two cultures that is often missing in more descriptive models. I believe that Akhtar's theory is invaluable for psychodynamic treatment. Seeing an immigrant patient over time allows an opportunity to observe the more subtle movements among these dimensions that the present study could not.

Birman's acculturation styles model

In contrast to Akhtar's theory, Birman (1994) presents a more descriptive model of the relationship between native and new cultures. Considering the descriptive goals of the present study, this model can help explain some of the findings. The model is multidimensional in nature, includes acculturation to two cultures and distinguishes between behavioral and identity components of this process. More recently, a dimension of language was added to this model (Birman & Trickett, 2001). As I described in the literature review, it identifies several styles of acculturation: assimilation, separation, and marginality, as well as four types of biculturalism: blended, instrumental, integrated, and identity exploration.

According to Birman's model (1994), I could identify Natasha as someone who is assimilated, Masha as an instrumental bicultural, Mark, Lena, and Andrei as blended biculturals with Alex somewhere in the process of becoming one; Anna, Vlad, and Boris are integrated biculturals with Regina and Olga close by. Even this complex model does not adequately describe the participants' experience. For example, Regina would not be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

defined as a blended bicultural because of her adamant insistence that she is "not an American!" Yet, I would argue that she is the most integrated immigrant among the participants in terms of both cultures. Her views on not being an American are related to her individual dynamics: her desire not to be labeled and be herself. I would guess that Regina would generally have a problem with my attempt to put her into any category.

Birman and her colleagues put immigrants' affective experiences regarding two cultures and their identifications with two cultures under the heading of identity. For example, the American identity section of the acculturation measure they use makes the following two statements: "I feel good about being an American" and "I feel that I am part of American culture." I believe that there is a conceptual difference between feeling as a part of a culture and one's identification. There is also no distinction made between cognitive and affective aspects of the dimension of identity. As Andrei reflected on his relationship to Russianness, he spoke rationally about his intention to preserve Russian aspects of his background, but expressed irritation about Brighton Beach. In addition, Birman's measure places "having American friends" in the behavioral section. The data in the present study demonstrated that relationships with Americans was the most difficult and conflictual element of the participants' Americanness. It might also be helpful to distinguish between different types of relationships with Americans: colleagues, acquaintances, or friends. To consider the Russian component of the acculturation measure, statements like "I think of myself as being Russian" or "I feel good about being Russian" may discount the various meanings attached to this notion of Russianness. For example, in a recent study of acculturation and personality dimensions (Simakhodskaya, 2000), participants were asked to check off the meaning of the word "Russian" in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

acculturation scale. Thirty-two percent defined "Russian" as "nationality in the former USSR", 71% as "former resident of the FSU", 19% as "former resident of Russian republic", and 42% as "someone who speaks Russian." Their responses to Birman's statements above would vary depending on their personal meaning of "Russian." The findings of the present study may help develop acculturation measures that are more sensitive to these distinctions.

I agree with Birman who states, "each of the bicultural styles... may be adaptive, depending on the individual, the circumstances of the ethnic, racial, and cultural groups to which the individual belongs, and the attitudes and constructions of ethnicity, race, and culture in a given society" (1994, p. 289). It is important to note that almost all participants, except Masha, are satisfied with their lives, are functioning well, and have little conscious conflict about their American versus Russian identities. Each chose a path that fits his or her life at this point.

Kleinian notions of paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions

As I sought to demonstrate in the analyses of the participants' stories, the notions of Kleinian positions of object relatedness were at times helpful in understanding the dynamics involved in the relationships to American and Russian cultures. For example, Andrei's denial of loss, action orientation, and splitting off his positive feelings about Russia may be seen as a predominance of the paranoid-schizoid position. Vlad's ambivalence about Brighton Beach may be explained by the notion of the depressive position, while his denigration of Americans and love for America may be perceived as splitting, i.e. use of paranoid-schizoid defenses. Vlad's story also provided evidence of the shifts between the two positions. While he at first denied feelings of loss and focused

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

on his achievements, Vlad was later able to acknowledge sadness and ambivalence he experienced regarding saying goodbye to his country and his love.

The greater the number of conscious or unconscious conflicts that were observed in the participants' stories, the more applicable were Kleinian notions of shifts between the two positions. Here is how Alex described this internal movement in relation to his feelings toward America:

> (If you watch, let's say, Olympic games and Russians are against Americans, who do you root for?) Americans. (Why?) It's my country. (Was it like this from the beginning or it changed at some point?) I think it was from the beginning. Well, before it was because I consciously did not like what I left behind, remember we talked about how I hated everything. Over time, this hatred diminished little by little, but during this time, America became my country. (Alex, see full quote on p. 286).

Alex's initial feelings about America were related to his hatred of Russia, i.e. paranoid-schizoid position and use of splitting. Over time, as his hatred for Russia subsided, Alex moved toward the depressive position and a sense of ambivalence.

The psychoanalytic literature typically regards the depressive position as a healthier set of object relations, similar to Akhtar's notion of integration and hybrid identity as a potentially better outcome of the identity crisis in immigration. However, the contemporary thought on the Kleinian positions posits that the mature oscillation between the two positions may be a better result (Gould, 1999). It is also believed that in some instances the state of the depressive position and defenses involved can actually interfere with healthy functioning. I would argue that Masha's difficulty in adjustment and her sense of marginalization from both Americanness and Russianness are related to her fixation in the depressive position and inability to resolve it. Her dependency on others may be seen as the "flight to external 'good' objects as a means to disprove all anxieties -

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

internal as well as external. This is a mechanism which is characteristic for neurosis and may lead to a slavish dependence on objects and to a weakness of the ego" (Klein, 1935, p. 289).

In sum, this study has demonstrated that the immigrants' relationships to Russianness and Americanness were complex, multidimensional, and multi-determined. The theoretical frameworks need not only to approach this subject in a multidimensional way, but also take into account an individual's personal identity and defensive style which has an impact on the relationships to both constructs. Models that postulate integration as the better and healthier choice leave out the context of immigrants' lives and their personal dynamics. A better goal would be the fit between an individual's needs and context. Participants are lucky to be living in a city where one can chose what fits best.

### 5.2 Jewishness

In this section I will elaborate on the results of this study's investigation of Jewishness among participants. The discussion will focus on two major issues: 1) The meaning of Jewishness, its development, and the impact of the immigration process on this construct; and, 2) The participants' ways of coping with anti-Semitism.

**Discussion 1: What is the meaning of Jewishness for Russian immigrants and how does it change? What impact did the immigration process have on the participants' Jewishness?**

I do not know when or by whom the term "Jewishness" was first used. However, it provides a sufficiently wide umbrella under which to consider all aspects of Jewish

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

identity, behaviors, attitudes, relationships, and meanings in the present study. The participants' narratives revealed myriad meanings and expressions associated with Jewishness. First of all, Jewishness was identified by the participants as an intrinsic part of who they are. They used notions of "blood connection," "air you breathe," or "something inside." The process of identification with one's parents as the first element of Jewish identity is appropriate here. As Ostow (1977) notes, "the child becomes Jewish before he knows that Jewishness exists" (p. 316). Similarly, Ritterband (1993) states that "Jewishness was an ineluctable, indelible part of his being [as a Soviet Jew]," as it related to daily anti-Semitism (p. 1). Related to that, the participants in this study identified two sources of the origins of their Jewishness: anti-Semitism and family traditions. These findings are consistent with the results of a study on Jewish identity in adolescents by Lax and Richards (1981). They found that while positive Jewish identifications were related to early good experiences, feelings of conflict were usually associated with painful experiences.

Consistent with other theory and research on Jewishness (Horowitz, 2000; Kliger & Carnes, 2000; Lax & Richards, 1981; Markowitz, 1993; Ritterband, 1993), the present study revealed multiple dimensions of Jewishness among this group of Russian immigrants. They included feelings of being different, a sense of belonging, one's background and roots, knowledge of history and culture, faith and religion, and affective experience. As Horowitz (2000) suggested, the subjective dimension of Jewish identity in the present study appeared to have two aspects, personal and relational. Personal aspects included the inner sense of Jewishness, one's background, feelings of difference, and other affective experiences associated with being Jewish. The relational aspect included a sense

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of belonging to a group or nation, the participants' relationship to Judaism or Jewish tradition, and a sense of being different.

The dimensions of Jewishness identified in this study are not mutually exclusive, but rather are intrinsically related. One's sense of difference may lead to feelings of shame. Knowledge of the group's history and culture is necessary to have a sense of Jewishness as one's background and roots, while the dimension of belonging includes an historical identity of Jews as a group. How the participants express their Jewishness depends to great extent on the degree of their emotional investment and commitment. These findings support the notion that Jewish identity can only be assessed using multidimensional instruments. Without such assessment, the research on Jewish identity and its relationship to psychological well being is inadequate.

Horowitz (2000) postulated that Jewish identity is not a static or monolithic entity, but rather something that changes as the person develops. The participants' narratives provided evidence of this process. Many participants described gradual movement from an attempt to hide their Jewishness, to actively fighting anti-Semitism, to a strong sense of Jewish identity. Helms (1990) offered a four-stage theory of Black racial identity: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, and internalization/commitment. While there are clear differences between Blacks and Jews in their experience of belonging to a minority group, there are also similarities. Helms suggests that there is a movement from anxiety and defensiveness as emotional themes at the stage of pre-encounter to feelings of anger and hurt during the encounter stage. However, the participants' stories indicated that they experienced feelings of shame and anxiety only during their first encounters with non-Jews and anti-Semitism. Other participants described a process of change in their

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jewishness from rejection to acceptance without commitment. For example, Natasha was the only participant to deny the importance of Jewishness in her life. She noted her desire as an adolescent to change her nationality in her passport, "not because I was ashamed, but to make my life easier." Such attempts to hide one's minority status and "to pass" can be a typical response of minority youth to prejudice and discrimination. Natasha states that she currently regrets trying to change her nationality because it is a part of who she is. While she now accepts Jewishness as her ethnicity, Natasha does not actively express it in any way. The developmental changes in the participants' Jewish identity are focused on both internal and external responses. Helms points out that the stages suggested above also present unique world views, or cognitive templates that people use to organize information about themselves, other people, and institutions. A future study that focuses more specifically on the development of Jewish identity among Russian Jews would help to illuminate these processes.

In addition to normal developmental shifts in one's Jewishness, participants also reflected on the impact of the immigration process. Having immigrated to a society where the meaning of Jewishness differed from their own experience, Russian Jews are faced with the dilemma of resolving these differences. The participants spoke about feeling misunderstood by Americans, including American Jews, regarding what it meant to them to be Jewish. Suddenly the notions of being "more" or "less" Jewish, or Jewish "enough" evolved. Ritterband (1993) noted that in the oral histories of Russian Jews who immigrated to the US in the late 1970s, a similar pattern of "treating Jewishness not as a nominal variable but as a theoretically conceivable ratio scale" was evident (p. 5). Such an understanding was a result of encounters with Americans who made observations

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

regarding Russian Jews' lack of religious adherence. In general, the participants spoke about their disappointment and resentment of the responses by American Jews. These findings were consistent with a study by Markowitz (1988) who described "mutual misunderstanding, disappointment, and resentment" of Russian and American Jews. At that time, Markowitz concluded that Russian Jews tend to maintain their cognitive premise that Jews are a people and not a religion, while incorporating some religious signs and symbols defined by American Jews. Although some participants revealed similar dynamics, for others there were more significant changes in their religiosity.

For some participants, increased faith and interest in religion began prior to immigrating. For others, interactions with Judaic institutions, and most importantly, with American Jews provided an opportunity to engage in spiritual and religious explorations. Lena, who attended Jewish history classes in Ukraine and studied in a yeshiva in the US, spoke about her faith in God as one of the factors that helped her survive the loneliness of her immigration experience. Similarly, Anna spoke about her faith and religion as her "stable ground." Three of eleven participants engaged in some type of religious observance in their daily lives. Kliger (2001) found that while Russian Jewish immigrants in his study consider themselves to be believers, only a small portion of them observe Judaic religious prescriptions in their life style. The findings of the present study may indicate something different. However, I agree with Kliger who states, "Whereas American Jews are profoundly American, Russian Jewish immigrants are intensely Russian." (p. 161).

Russian Jewish immigrants are searching for a way to make choices about Jewishness the same way they are negotiating ways to be a Russian or to be an American.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This search was evident in the participants' views on different Judaic movements and synagogues. Several of them spoke about their preference for Conservative synagogues because in participants' eyes it represented a "middle ground" between the rigidity of the Orthodox movement and the nontraditional nature of the Reformed. The organizations involved in engaging Russian Jewish may need to consider this finding in their activities. Anna also spoke about searching for a rabbi who would represent her need for integrity and truthfulness in being Jewish. What all participants are searching for is a way to be Jewish that is consistent with who they are. Boris previously attended synagogue regularly and "did feel a very strong connection to religion." However, currently he feels differently:

> At this moment I just don't feel it, and it makes no sense doing something that you don't feel about. [ ] At some point you realize that like going to the synagogue and spending three hours every Saturday chanting the same prayers and saying the same things over and over, uhmm it's just not something I want to do. (Interview 3)

Nonetheless, he expresses his Jewish faith by celebrating major holidays and by planning to enroll his child in a Hebrew school. Vlad pointed out that being Jewish means many things. Most importantly, he sees it as a way of life. I stated above that Russian immigrants in New York were lucky to live in a city that offers them opportunities to be Russian or American in a way that fits them. Similarly, it is "offering a context for experimentation and for new possibilities about how to be Jewish or how to express Jewishness." (Horowitz, 1998, p. 88).

The participants were forced to reflect on things that they had taken for granted. This questioning and subsequent exploration (reading about Jewish history and Judaism, taking classes, attending synagogues), lead to internal and behavioral changes in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

participants' Jewishness. The experience with narrative therapy indicates that the telling and re-telling one's story often leads both to identity and behavioral changes (White, 1998). I believe that the importance participants placed on continuing Jewish traditions and culture was another aspect of the impact of the immigration process on their Jewishness. Ostow (1977) states that the need for the assertion of continuity among Jews is frequently elicited by confrontation with separation. While he focuses on the separation anxieties typical of adolescents, this notion is applicable to Jewish immigrants. As the results of this study have demonstrated, the need for stability and continuity during the immigration process was essential in the participants' experience. It affected their relationship with Jewishness as well. Anna stated. "It's your responsibility to make sure that we don't disappear as Jews, don't mix with other nationalities. [ ] It is a personal responsibility that the nation continues to exist, that it would survive." Schlesinger (1979) states, "survival is remembering and being remembered. It is maintenance of continuity in consciousness" (p. 326).

There is no question that the immigration process had an impact on one's Jewish identity. I would also suggest that the participants' experiences with anti-Semitism and their sense of belonging to a community in the former Soviet Union affected their immigration experience. I wonder whether the participants' desire to be a part of American society is in some ways similar to how Jews in Russia tried to assimilate into the Soviet society in order to succeed. One must remember that Russian Jews immigrating to the US have an advantage in comparison to other ethnic groups. They are white, well-educated, and have the strong support of a large American Jewish community. I would also suggest that the history of survival as a nation and the experience of "surviving"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

minority status in the FSU prepared most participants to cope with the difficulties of being an immigrant. Ostow (1977) indicates that "an actual threat to a group impels its members to reinforce their commitment to each other for purposes of defense of the group; a recollected threat exerts a similar influence" (p. 317). He continues to say that such recollections and myths remind individuals that they could also overcome danger. In the case of Russian Jews, they all had to find a way to cope with the prejudice and discrimination.

A note on Jewishness, Russianness, and Americanness

In this manuscript I dealt with these three concepts separately for the purpose of the presentation. However, they all can be seen as representing an aspect of one's identity which could be defined in various circumstances as *ethnicity, nationality, or ethnicity/nationality*. Although these two words do not adequately and fully describe the concepts involved, their main focus on identification and national origin is the closest definition I could develop. As noted previously, Akhtar and Samuel (1996) defined one of the seven components of cohesive identity as *ethnicity*. It is the culture of a people, the sense of history, modes of expression, and patterns of interpersonal behavior, as well as a sense of belonging to an historical community that create this term. In terms of modes of expression, one is aware (or observant) of religious festivals, has a subtle preference for homoethnic ties, certain foods and music, and uses linguistic expressions consistent with one's roots. While I distinguished three dimensions of Russianness (relationship to the country, relationship to the people, and identification) and six dimensions of Jewishness, the common denominator was a sense of an identification. Both Russianness and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jewishness included a sense of difference (a Russian as an immigrant in the US and a Jew as a minority in the former USSR), a sense of belonging to a group of people or a nation, one's background and roots, knowledge of one's history and culture, and emotional ties. Both concepts had unique dimensions, which were relationship to the country in Russianness and faith and religion in Jewishness.

I described above the changes in the participants' sense of Jewishness throughout their immigration process. In terms of Russianness, it is important to note that the meaning of being a Russian in the US, as opposed to the former USSR, are quite different. First, in the USSR these participants would have never identified themselves as Russian. They would have talked about being Jewish and belonging to the Russian/Soviet culture. This is equivalent to what it means to native-born Americans to be an American. It is something that is typically difficult to describe and that which becomes more apparent when one leaves the US. For immigrants, feelings and thoughts about national origin come to the fore. For some, Russianness currently represents their ethnicity and national origin. For many Russian immigrants, being Russian and being Jewish are intrinsically connected. While some participants stated, "I am a Russian Jew," others identified themselves as "I am a Jew from Russia." Alex stated that he is "Russian Jewish American in no particular order." Americanness, on the other hand, is a newly acquired dimension of their identity. It is mostly about their relationship to America as a country and as a society, as well as about relationships to Americans.

**<u>Discussion 2:</u> How do Russian Jews cope with anti-Semitism? This section will focus on the psychological defenses used by the participants to deal with this issue.**

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Lena was emphatic about her belief that one "cannot become a Jew." Unless a person experiences prejudice and struggles other Jews endured, he cannot understand what it is like to be a Jew. Ritterband (1993) noted that "it was precisely the hostile atmosphere of the Soviet Union that intensified the sense of a Jewish self" (p. 12). Anti-Semitism and a sense of being different or "less than" were often the first things the participants mentioned about Jewishness. Kaufman and Raphael (1987) focused on the negative affects associated with Jewishness and anti-Semitism and consequent responses of hiding, avoidance, and escape. I would like to emphasize that while such dynamics were present in the participants' stories, the positive aspects of Jewishness dominated. I agree with Ostow (1977) and Lax and Richards (1981) who speak about internalization of positive interactions with one's parents, family, and community as the sources of positive Jewish identity.

As I indicated earlier, the data revealed diverse ways in which the participants responded to anti-Semitism and prejudice. They tried to hide their Jewishness and fit into the majority culture. They minimized its importance or rejected it. They defended themselves verbally and physically. They withdrew into the Jewish community and exercised their Jewishness anyway. They expressed pride and, at times, feelings of superiority. Although some theories would identify these responses as representing typical ways in which members of a minority group react to prejudice and bias (Grady, 2002; Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1990), what is missing in the literature is the relationship between an individual's overall identity, i.e. approach to life, and such responses.

Such a relationship was clear in the participants' stories. Regina identified the source of her need to "be myself" in the family conflict and her paternal relatives' anti-

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Semitism. Consistent with her desire not to be labeled, Regina emphasized that Jewishness is an important part of who she is, but it does not define who she is. Anna's response to anti-Semitism and torture was to be aggressive. Her story revealed an overall tendency to be impulsive and use aggression as a defense. Natasha's rejection of Jewishness is consistent with her need to fit in and not to stand out, while Lena's negative experiences with anti-Semitism affected her own need to fit in and be a part of the society. Being Jewish, reacting to anti-Semitism, and one's overall identity are intrinsically and mutually related. This study views Jewish identity as one aspect of a person's overall sense of self, and as such, it is protected by the same ego defenses used in negotiating the immigration experience described earlier.

Similar dynamics involved in the participants' relationships to Russianness and Americanness described above were involved in their sense of Jewishness and how it is expressed. They included differences in participants' experience of various dimensions of Jewishness, as well as the dynamic process of change and development. For instance, the sense of privilege of belonging to the "chosen people" expressed by Vlad and Andrei was consistent with their overall need to defend against feelings of inferiority. Although Akhtar described the dimension of social affiliation and movement along it as relating to identity change in the immigration experience, the notion of "we-ness" can be applied to the concept of Jewishness as well. Whether participants saw being Jewish as an "us versus them" split or were able have a positive inner sense of Jewishness without the need to denigrate non-Jews speaks to who they are and where they stand in the process of their ethnic identity development. Similarly, the participants' relationships to their Jewishness could be seen from the Kleinian perspective of depressive and paranoid-schizoid positions.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Natasha's wish to change her nationality in the former USSR and her rejection of Jewishness is consistent with her overall object relatedness, which is dominated by splitting. Anna is struggling with feelings of ambivalence as she believes in the importance of marrying a Jew for the continuity of Jewish nation, and yet she is involved in an intimate relationship with a non-Jew. She appears to be shifting between paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions.

In addition to all other meanings of being Jewish, to be a Jew meant an opportunity to immigrate. Whether they expected it or not, participants in this study were changed by this experience. The immigration experience challenged them to face their fears, to confront their world views, and negotiate an unknown terrain. They were also challenged to reflect on being Jewish and to face different views on what it means to be Jewish. This journey of self-discovery will continue throughout their life.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Concluding Remarks

The journey of conducting and writing about this research has been challenging. I set out to explore the subjective experience of the immigration process, and its impact on one's sense of self, using qualitative methods. After analyzing my own narrative of my immigration experience and reviewing the existing literature on the subject, I interviewed eleven young adult Russian Jews who immigrated to the US as adults between five and eleven years ago. The result is a set of rich and diverse stories of personal journeys through a challenging experience.

Immigration is an experience of a significant, and not always wanted, change in one's environment. We moved across the world to seek a better life, to escape political and economical instability, and to follow the Jewish community. While for some participants it was a long-awaited journey, for others it was a trip they never thought of taking. Yet, having taken this journey, they all engaged in negotiating the two major aspects of the immigration experience: the importance of continuity and the process of change in one's sense of self. The immigration process, with its experiences of uprootedness, presented a challenge to young adult Russian Jews, a challenge that magnified the two dimensions of identity: one that preserves the sameness and continuity of self over time and one that is available for change. The positive changes in their sense of self reported by the participants in this study included increased confidence in their abilities, increased independence, and self-actualization. However, these changes at times came at a cost of becoming harsh and depressed, and feelings of instability. The two dimensions of change and continuity of self were in constant tension and required each immigrant to engage his or her psychological defenses to maintain a sense of equilibrium.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The immigrants in this study conveyed a multiplicity of affective experiences related to their immigration process, including sadness, uncertainty, fear, loneliness, excitement, embarrassment, anger, depression, and nostalgia. An in-depth analysis of each person's story indicated a close relationship between the dominating affects they reported and their general defensive style and identity. The way participants approached negotiating their immigration experience was consistent with their identity. While the psychoanalytic literature on the subject of immigration and its impact on one's sense of self typically focuses on trauma and mourning process (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989), the results of the current study revealed a more normative process of coping with a significant life transition. As clinicians working with immigrants, rather than making assumptions about "typical" psychodynamics of the immigration process, we need to listen to each person's story, the way it is told, and the meaning it has for each person. How immigrants experience this process, the defenses they engage to cope with anxieties and conflicts, and choices they make along the way, will tell us more about who they are. Consistent with the literature on immigration and mental health, the results of this study indicated that those who had pre-existing psychological vulnerabilities and who felt forced to immigrate against their will had the most difficulty in this process. The factors that assisted the participants in negotiation this difficult journey included peer, community, and family support, a willingness to take risks, and a capacity to experience and reflect on diverse emotional experiences.

While at times the issues of the immigration experience and Jewishness were separated in this manuscript for the purpose of clarity and organization, they are intrinsically related. Being Jewish is what allowed these participants to immigrate to the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

US. Their experience of dealing with being an ethnic minority in the former Soviet Union in some way prepared them for the difficult journey of being an immigrant. Jewishness is an important part of the participants' identities. The results of this study revealed multiple and coexisting meanings of Jewishness, including a sense of being different, belonging to a group or a nation, one's background and roots, knowledge about history and culture, faith and religion, and affective experiences attached to it. Consistent with the literature on this subject (Horowitz, 2000), the participants' stories indicated that Jewishness is a changing rather than a static construct. In addition to normative developmental changes in their Jewish identity and ways in which it is expressed, the present study focused on the impact of the immigration process. Having been challenged to reflect on their Jewishness through this process, young adult Russian Jews are in the process of exploring its meaning and figuring out a way to express it in a way that fits with who they are. This occurs in the same way that they are negotiating the meanings of Russianness and Americanness as well.

At the beginning of my study I posited the questions that are asked by all of us. Who am I? Where do I belong? How did I change? How am I different? Who am I in the process of becoming? While the immigration process brings these questions to the fore, the stories told in this study teach all of us the value of taking risks, examining ourselves, and coping with life changes.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Appendix A**

## Prescreening Form

Name:_____

Address:_____

Phone:_____

Age:_____ Date of birth:_____

Relationship status:_____ (if in a relationship, how many years?)_____

Education:_____

Occupation:_____

Date of immigration:_____

Republic of residence in the FSU:_____

Other:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

---

If recruited, tape number and pseudonym:_____

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Appendix B**

# Semi-structured Interview

## Current Life

Tell me about your life now, at this point. (If you were writing your autobiography right now and the last chapter was about present day, what would you write about?)

- Job
- School
- Family
- Relationships: (If partnered) Tell me about your partner.
- Can you tell us when, where, and how you met this person?
- Living situation
- Free time

## Immigration History

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 was it decided? What were the major reasons and who was mostly making decisions?

- How did you prepare?
- What did you imagine it would be like?
- What were your feelings about immigrating?
- Tell me about the first few months.
- Who helped? What did you do? What do you remember about that time? What were you like as a person?
- What did you have to adjust to? Give me examples.
- What did you like about being in the US?
- How were things different from what you imagined?

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

- 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?
- Who did you date? Talk about past relationships. How did immigration affect them?
- What do you remember about your interactions with Americans?
- What do you remember about your interactions with other Russian immigrants?
- Could you identify certain turning points or stages of your adaptation?

**Immigration experience at the present moment**

How about your interactions with Americans and Russian immigrants now?

Do you want to go back and live in your home country? Why/why not?

How do you think the experience of immigration affected you as a person?

Let's talk about language issues:

- What language do you speak at home?
- What language do you speak at work?
- What language do you speak with friends?
- What language do you speak with family?
- What do you feel more comfortable expressing in English?
- What do you feel more comfortable expressing in Russian?
- What about Ruglish?
- Reading in Russian and in English?

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

How do you identify yourself? Background and heritage (probe: Russian, Jewish, Russian Jew)

- What does it mean to you now?
- Has it changed over time? What kind of things changed?
- How do you feel about being.....?
- What kind of "Russian" or "American" things do you do?
- How do you feel when you go to Brighton Beach? If doesn't go, why not?
- If Russian athlete/team is playing against American, who do you root for?
- Are there different types of Russians? What kind? Who do you prefer to be around?
- How do you think Russians are seen in the US?
- How about Jews?
- What do you think it means to be an American?
- Did your mother or father express any expectations to you about the type of person you should marry or whether you should marry at all?
- And how do YOU feel about these issues?
- What ethnicity have the people you've dated been?
- Have you ever dated anyone who is not Russian? Not Jewish? Was that an issue in the relationship? In what ways?
- What do you want to pass on to your children from your background?

**Jewish Identity:**

When did you first realize you were Jewish?

What did it mean?

What did you parents say to you?

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

How did this change since you immigrated?

What does it mean now?

How much do you know about Jewish religion? How did you learn it?

Do you want to know more about Jewish history and religion?

What do you want to pass on to your children?

How important it is for you to marry a Jewish person?

Do you think religion will be important to your children?

Do you feel a special responsibility towards Jewish people or to support Jewish causes?

What kind of Jewish things you do?

What is it like to go to a Jewish wedding, funeral, barmitsva?

Have you ever been to Israel? (If Yes) Can you tell me about that? Why did you go there? What was it like to be there? (If No) Do you want to visit there? Live there? Why/Why Not? Would you ever consider living there? Why or why not?]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Appendix C**

**Immigration Experience and Personal Change**
**CONSENT FORM**

Name_____ Date_____

I understand that the purpose of the study is to explore my immigration experience as it relates to my conception of myself and personal change. Further, I know the study will focus on various aspects of my sense of self, including my Jewish identity.

If I choose to take part, I agree to meet with the interviewer twice for approximately 1.5 hours each time to discuss my immigration experience and personal change.

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 but 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. By signing this form I agree that I will be willing to be contacted in the future for possible interviews although I am under no obligation to participate.

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 have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I have about my participation in this study. 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.

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 Zoya Simakhodskaya, MA, at 917-922-9601 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

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## Appendix D

### Coding of the First Interview

I. *From the narrative*

Suburban family guy
I am
Choosing neighborhood
Leisure
Reading
- Russian
- English

Job
- Programming
- Economics
- Priorities change
- Passion

Family life
- Regular
- Child: busy with him
- Marriage and its development
- Wife

Parents
- Wishing for parents to be closer
- Conflicts with parents

Immigration
- Pre-immigration history
  - Refuseniks
  - College in Ukraine
  - Middle class
- Reasons for leaving
  - Going along with others
  - Didn't like the system
  - Didn't see the future
- Expectations
- First years (1-3)
- Bowl of shit
- Organizations helped
- Working hard
- Next years (3-6)
- Wish to be independent
- Uncertainty
- Stress and difficulty
- Success
- I just did it
- Sent furniture
- Mixed feelings
- Gradual change
- Help from relatives
- Russian friends
- American friends
- Adjustment

II. *My thoughts and observations*

Conflicted about career
Conflicted about being with his son: love vs no time
Refused to talk about immigration difficulties
Focusing on financial aspects
Importance of Russian community
Wrapping topics
Only Russian with me after interview

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Appendix E**

**Themes from Boris' interviews**

Before Immigration:
- difficulty making a decision to immigrate
- going along with others who were emigrating
- having mixed feelings (excitement and fear of the unknown)

Upon Arrival:
- "bowl of shit" - lack of money, working menial jobs, uncertainty, lack of guidance
- importance of support by Russian friends and Jewish/American agencies
- language difficulties
- longing for Russian culture
- getting an education

Adjusting:
- learning the language and understanding the culture better through interactions with Americans, watching movies and TV shows, reading books
- improved financial situation
- making new friends and keeping in touch with old friends

Impact of Immigration Experience:
- confronting new challenges and succeeding (importance of the sense of agency)
- "being in a league of your own": surviving and succeeding

Developmental Issues:
- time of immigration described as adolescence: loss, immaturity
- references to maturation
- now - confidence, goal oriented, financial stability

Trip Back:
- trauma/shock: seeing how people changed
- splitting/cutting off

Cost/Limitations
- settling for a job that pays more rather than pursuing passion
- importance of stability

Identity
- suburban family guy, software engineer, loves economics
- need for control
- stability
- mastering the environment
- splitting
- editing his narrative

Jewishness
- pre-immigration: parental grandparents were religious
- meaning: people liked/disliked, paths were closed, cultural connection
- interest in religion, but does not want to be "too observant," celebrating Passover
- "wolf-pack" - belonging to a group

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

# Appendix F

## I-Themes for all participants

**Regina: Don't put me in a box - I want to be myself.**

Theme 1: It was my decision to immigrate.
Theme 2: Initial period - I was depressed and excited.
Theme 3: Adjusting to the US was a gradual process for me.
Theme 4: I can be who I am. Being a New Yorker fits me.
Theme 5: Overall, the immigration process has had a positive impact on me.
Theme 6: I needed to protect parts of myself I value.
Theme 7: Stability is important for me now.
Theme 8: For me, being Jewish means being "less than."
Theme 9: Roots of wanting to be myself are related to Jewishness.

**Mark: I feel torn - Who am I, really?**

Theme 1: I am full of contradictions and conflicts
Theme 2: My decisions are externally driven.
Theme 3: Decision to immigrate - I went with the wave
Theme 4: I felt "normal fear" - fear of the unknown
Theme 5: For me, immigration was a two stage process
Theme 6: Feeling embarrassed pushed me to learn English and interact with Americans
Theme 7: Immigration had an impact on my confidence
Theme 8: My marriage and divorce played a significant role in my immigration experience
Theme 9: Acquiring and preserving knowledge is a way to protect yourself from losses
Theme 10: Jewish traditions are important for me because they provide stability and a base
Theme 11: I belong to a great nation and feel privileged

**Natasha: I want to fit in. I don't like to stand out.**

Theme 1: Closeness is the dance I do.
Theme 2: I try to look at the bright side and not to get upset.
Theme 3: Immigrating was not hard, but at first I felt like an idiot.
Theme 4: Immigration provided an opportunity for me to be myself and feel more confident.
Theme 5: Since I immigrated, stability and security are important for me.
Theme 6: I had some negative experiences as a Jew in Russia.
Theme 7: Jewishness does not mean a lot to me.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

**Lena: I want to be myself but also to fit in.**

Theme 1: I want to fit in but maintain my individuality.
Theme 2: It was an enormous change. I felt very lonely and needed someone to be close to me.
Theme 3: It is important for me to feel at home here. I want to be one of them.
Theme 4: The immigration experience had both a positive and negative impact on me as a person.
Theme 5: Immigrating alone helped me to separate and individuate from my parents.
Theme 6: My negative experiences with anti-Semitism affected my wish to fit in.
Theme 7: Jewishness is a big part of who I am.

**Olga: I long for stability and permanence in relationships.**

Theme 1: I tend to be dominated by others and often do not actualize my abilities and dreams.
Theme 2: Immigrating was like an adventure. Only in my poetry and later on I realized the losses I experienced.
Theme 3: It was a gradual process of saying good bye and adjusting to the US.
Theme 4: The stability of relationships is very important to me and they played a major role in my adjustment.
Theme 5: Immigration experience was liberating and helped me to discover myself.
Theme 6: Immigrating to the US was the end of my childhood.
Theme 7: Being Jewish in the US was confusing and I had to adjust over time.
Theme 8: Being Jewish for me is about family and belonging.

**Masha: I feel overwhelmed and need emotional connection**.

Theme 1: I am depressed and isolated. I need emotional connection with others.
Theme 2: I did not want to immigrate.
Theme 3: Immigration was a significant change. It was like a small death.
Theme 4: I matured through immigration process at a significant psychological cost.
Theme 5: Immigrating pushed me to separate from my mother.
Theme 6: I do not belong to either Russian or American community.
Theme 7: I always felt more as a Jew.
Theme 8: Jewishness is very important to me. It's about a sense of belonging and a family.

**Anna: I am a survivor.**

Theme 1: Life's challenges make me stronger, but they also make me numb.
Theme 2: I can be impulsive and reactive.
Theme 3: I did not want to immigrate and resented being here.
Theme 4: It was a gradual and difficult process of accepting my immigration.
Theme 5: Immigration made me stronger but my adjustment to the US came at a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

significant cost.
Theme 6: I long for stability, groundness, and permanence.
Theme 7: I was severely persecuted as a Jew in Russia because I was different, but it only made me stronger.
Theme 8: Immigrating to the US provided me with an opportunity to learn about Judaism which finally gave me a sense of belonging and stability.

**Andrei: I approach things logically and rationally.**

Theme 1: I approach things logically and rationally. I know my own value and strengths.
Theme 2: I made the decision to immigrate based on the situation.
Theme 3: It was a gradual process of learning and understanding the environment here.
Theme 4: I worked on getting on my feet and getting to the next level.
Theme 5: I did not lose anything, but only gained. In order to succeed, you cannot look back.
Theme 6: I choose the best of two worlds: Russian and American.
Theme 7: Being Jewish means belonging to the best nation in the world.

**Vlad: I want to achieve to show others my abilities.**

Theme 1: I can be harsh and aggressive if people put me down. I want to achieve to show others my abilities.
Theme 2: Decision to immigrate: I pushed my parents to leave. I had mixed feeling about leaving.
Theme 3: Initial period: I felt confused and inferior to others.
Theme 4: It was a graduate process of learning and becoming more comfortable in the US.
Theme 5: The hardships of immigration process only made me more independent. I want to achieve more.
Theme 6: I resent my extended family who did not provide adequate support for us.
Theme 7: I have mixed feelings about America and Americans. I don't want to lose my Russian background.
Theme 8: Nobody can take away my sense of belonging to the Jewish people.

**Alex: I am self sufficient. I am responsible for those close to me.**

Theme 1: I am self sufficient. I am responsible for those close to me.
Theme 2: I hated everything in Russia and always wanted to immigrate.
Theme 3: I had no difficulty adjusting in the US.
Theme 4: It was a gradual process of adjustment and personal change.
Theme 5: My life started in America. I am more confident now.
Theme 6: Being Jewish is very important to me and means several things.
Theme 7: The meaning of being Jewish changed over time.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

## Bibliography

Akhtar, S. (1995). A third individuation: immigration, identity, and the psychoanalytic process. Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association, 43 (4), 1051-1084.

Akhtar, S. & Samuel, S. (1996). The concept of identity: developmental origins, phenomenology, clinical relevance and measurement. Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 3 (5), 254-267.

Akhtar, S. (1999). Immigration and Identity. Northdale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

Amati-Mehler, J., Argentieri, S. & Canestri, J. (1993). The Babel of the Unconscious. Mother tongue and foreign languages in the psychoanalytic dimension. Madison, CT: International Universities Press, Inc.

Aroian, K. J., Spitzer, A., & Bell, M. (1996). Family stress and support among former Soviet immigrants. Western Journal of Nursing Research, 18(6), 655-674.

Berger, R. (1997). Adolescent immigrants in search of identity: clingers, eradicators, vacillators, and integraters. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 14(4), 263-275.

Berry, J.W. & Sam, D.L. (1997). Acculturation and adaptation. In J.W. Berry, M.H. Segall, & C. Kagitcibasi (Eds.), Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology (Vol. 3, pp. 291-326). Second Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Birman, D. (1994). Acculturation and human diversity in a multicultural society. In E. J. Trickett, R. J. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context (pp. 261-284). San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.

Birman, D. & Trickett, E. (2001) Cultural transitions in first-generation immigrants: Acculturation of Soviet Jewish refugee adolescents and parents. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 32(4), 456-477

Birman, D., & Tyler, F. B. (1994). Acculturation and adjustment of Soviet Jewish refugees in the United States. Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs, 120(1), 101-115.

Blasi, A. (1988). Identity and the development of the self. In D.K. Lapsley & F.C. Power (Eds.), Self, Ego, and Identity: Integrative approaches. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Blos, P. (1979). The Adolescent Passage: Developmental issues. New York, NY: International Universities Press.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Clausen, J.A. (1995). Gender, contexts, and turning points in adults' lives. In P. Moen, G. Elder Jr., & K. Luescher (Eds.), Examining Lives in Context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development. Washington, DC: APA Press.

Cytrynbaum, S., Blum, L., Patrick, R., Stein, J., Wadner, D. & Wilk, C. (1980). Midlife development: a personality and social systems perspective. In L. Poon (Ed.), Aging in the 1980s. Washington, DC: Springer Publishing Co., pp. 463-474.

de Vryer, M.A. (1989). Leaving, longing, and loving: a developmental perspective of migration. Journal of American College Health, 38(2), 75-80.

Dorman, L. & Stricker, G. (2001). Motives for immigration of elderly Russian immigrants to the United States. NYS Psychologist, January, 44-48.

Drachman, D. & Harberstadt, A. (1992). A stage of migration framework as applied to recent Soviet emigres. Journal of Multicultural Social Work, 2(1), 63-78

Ely, M. with Anzul, M., Friedman, T., Garner, D. & McCormack Steinmetz, A. (1991). Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within circles. Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press.

Ely, M., Vinz, R., Anzul, M., & Downing, M. (1997). On Writing Qualitative Research: Living by words. Washington, DC: The Falmer Press.

Erikson, E.H. (1950). Childhood and Society. New York, NY: Norton.

Erikson, E.H. (1959, 1980). Identity and the Life Cycle. New York, NY: Norton.

Erikson, E.H. (1964). Insight and Responsibility. New York, NY: Norton.

Erikson, E.H. (1968). Identity: Youth and crisis. New York, NY: Norton.

Erikson, E.H. (1987). Psychosocial identity. In S. Schlein (Ed.), Erik H. Erikson: A Way of Looking at Things. Selected papers from 1930 to 1980. New York, NY: WW Norton & Company.

Epstein, A. & Levin, R. (1996). The impact of Jewish identity on the psychological adjustment of Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel. Israeli Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences, 33(1), 21-31.

Evans, B. (1970). Dictionary of mythology. New York, NY: Dell Publishing.

Freud, S. (1926). Address to the Society of B'nai B'rith. S.E. 20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Freud, S. (1947, 1994). Mourning and melancholia. Reprinted in R. Frankiel (Ed.), Essential Papers on Object Loss (pp. 38-51). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Flaherty, J.A., Kohn, R., Golbin, A., Gaviria, M. & Birz, S. (1986). Demoralization and social support in Soviet-Jewish immigrants to the United States. Comprehensive Psychiatry,27(2), 149-158.

Flaherty, J.A., Kohn, R., Levav I., & Birz, S. (1988). Demoralization in Soviet-Jewish immigrants to the United States and Israel. Comprehensive Psychiatry, 29 (6), 588-597.

Galperin, M. (1988). Soviet Jewish émigré adolescents' adjustment to the U.S.: Comparisons with American norms and inter-relationships of parent-and self-reported adolescent psychopathology and social adjustment with family environment factors, parental attitudes and demographics. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, New York, NY.

Garza-Guerrero, A.C. (1974). Culture shock: its mourning and the vicissitudes of identity. Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association, 22(2), 408-429.

Gehrie, M.J. (1979). Culture as an internal representation. Psychiatry, 42(5), 165-170.

Gergen, K.J. & Gergen, M.M. (1983). Narratives of the self. In T.R. Sarbin & K.E. Scheibe (Eds.), Studies in Social Identity. New York, NY: Praeger.

Gould, L.J. (1999). Holding the Center: Klein's developmental position values, leadership and the moral order. Presented at the ISPSO Symposium in Toronto.

Grady, D. (2002). A Qualitative Study of Adult Development and Career Transition in Gay Male Dancers. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY.

Grinberg, L. & Grinberg, R. (1989). Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Grove, J.R., Lavallee, D. & Gordon, S. (1997). Coping with retirement from sport: the influence of athletic identity. Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 9(2), 191-203.

Hartmann, H. (1959). Comments on the psychoanalytic theory of the ego. In Essays on Ego Psychology (pp. 113-141). New York, NY: International Universities Press.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Heitman, S. (1991). Soviet Emigration in 1990: A new "Fourth Wave"? Soviet Jewish Affairs, 21 (2), 11-21.

Helms, J. (Ed.). (1990). Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, research, and practice. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Hoffman, E. (1989). Lost in Translation: A life in a new language. New York, NY: Dutton.

Horowitz, B. (1998). Connections and journeys: shifting identities among American Jews. Contemporary Jewry, 19, 63-94.

Horowitz, B. (2000). Connections and Journeys: Assessing critical opportunities for enhancing Jewish identity. A report to the Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal at UJA-Federation of New York.

Hoyle, R.H., Kernis, M.H., Leary, M.R., & Baldwin, M.W. (1999). Selfhood: identity, esteem, regulation. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Kasinitz, P., Zeltzer-Zubida, A. & Simakhodskaya, Z. (2001). The Next Generation: Russian Jewish Young Adults in Contemporary New York. Report submitted to United Jewish Appeal Federation. New York, NY.

Kaufman, G. & Raphael, L. (1987). Shame: a perspective on Jewish identity. Journal of Psychology and Judaism, 11(1), 30-40.

Kernberg, O. (1975; 1985). Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism. New York: Jason Aronson.

Klein, M. (1935, 1992). A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states. Reprinted in Reprinted in The Writings of Melanie Klein. London: Karnac Books. Volume 1, 262-289.

Klein, M. (1940, 1992). Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states. Reprinted in Reprinted in The Writings of Melanie Klein. London: Karnac Books. Volume 1, 344-369.

Klein, M. (1946, 1993). Notes on some schizoid mechanisms. Reprinted in The Writings of Melanie Klein. London: Karnac Books. Volume 3, 1-24.

Kliger, S. & Carnes, T. (2000). Russian Jewish Immigrants in New York City: status, identity, and integration. Report to the American Jewish Committee.

Kliger, S. (2001). The religion of New York Jews from the former Soviet Union. In T. Carnes & A. Karpathakis (Eds.), New York Glory: Religions in the City (pp. 148-

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

161). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Kosmin, B. (1990). The Class of 1979: the "Acculturation" of Jewish Immigrants from the Soviet Union. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.

Jacobson, E. (1964). The Self and the Object World. New York, NY: International University Press.

Jaques, E. (1980). The midlife crisis. In S.I. Greenspan & G.H. Pollock (Eds.), The Course of Life (pp. 1-23). Washington, DC: NIMH.

Lax, R. & Richards, A.K. (1981). Observations on the formation of Jewish identity in adolescents: research report. Israeli Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences, 18(4), 299-310.

Levinson, D. (1986). A conception of adult development. American Psychologist, 41(1), 3-13.

Levinson, D., Darrow, C.N., Klein, E.B., Levinson, M.H. & McKee, B. (1978). Seasons of a man's life. New York, NY: Knopf.

Levy-Warren, M.H. (1987). Moving to a new culture: cultural identity, loss, and mourning. In J. Bloom-Feshbach, S. Bloom-Feshback, et al. (Eds.), The Psychology of Separation and Loss (pp. 300-315). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Lewine, E. (1999). From Brighton Beach to America. The New York Times. (March 14).

Mahler, M.S., Pine, F., & Bergman, A. (1975). The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Marcia, J.E. (1980). Identity in adolescence. In J. Adelso (Ed.), Handbook of Adolescent Psychology, (pp. 159-187). New York, NY: Wiley.

Markowitz, F. (1988). Jewish in the USSR, Russian in the USA. In W.P. Zenner (Ed.), Persistence and Flexibility: Anthropological studies of American Jewry (pp. 79-95.). Albany: SUNY Press.

Markowitz, F. (1993). A Community in Spite of Itself: Soviet Jewish emigres in New York. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Markowitz, F. (1994). Family dynamics and the teenage immigrant: creating the self through the parents' image. Adolescence, 29 (113), 151-161.

Markowitz, F. (1995). Criss-crossing identities: the Russian Jewish diaspora and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Jewish diaspora in Russia. Diaspora, 4(2), 201-210.

Markowitz, F. (1997). Diasporas with a difference: Jewish and Georgian teenagers' ethnic identity in the Russian Federation. Diaspora, 6(3), 331-353.

Markus, R. L. & Schwartz, D.V. (1984). Soviet Jewish émigrés in Toronto: Ethnic self-identity and issues of integration. Canadian Ethnic Studies, 16(2), 71-87.

Mason-Schrock, D. (1996). Transsexuals' narrative construction of the "true self." Social Psychology Quarterly, 59 (3), 176-192.

McAdams, D.P. (1993). The Stories We Live By. Personal myths and the making of the self. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

McAdams, D. P. (1995). What Do We Know When We Know a Person? Journal of Personality, 63 (3), 365-396.

Mirsky, J., Ginath, Y., Perl. E., & Risner, M. (1992). The psychological profile of Jewish late adolescents in the USSR: A pre-immigration study. Israel Journal of Psychiatry Related Science, 29(3), 150-158.

Mollenkopf, J., Kasinitz, P. & Waters, M. (1997). The Immigrant Second Generation in Metropolitan New York. A proposal submitted to the Russell Sage Foundation.

Newton, P. (1995). Some suggestions for the conduct of biographical research. Journal of Adult Development, 2 (3), 147-158.

Ostow, M. (1977). The psychologic determinants of Jewish identity. The Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Sciences, 15(4), 313-335.

Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: review of research. Psychological Bulletin, 108 (3), 499-514.

Pickens, D.S. (1994). Midlife women: confronting the developmental challenge of formulating a generative identity. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Purdue University.

Pine, F. (1982). The experience of self: aspects of its formation, expansion, and vulnerability. Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 37, 143-167.

Ponizovsky. A., Ginath, Y., Durst, R., Wondimeneh, B., Safro, S., Minuchin-Itzigson, S. & Ritsner, M. (1998). Psychological distress among Ethiopian and Russian Jewish immigrants to Israel: a cross-cultural study. International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 44 (1), 35-45.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Rice, E. (1994). Jewish heritage of Freud. Psychoanalytic Review, 81(2), 237-258.

Ritterband, P. (1993). The Jewishness of Soviet Jews in New York. Unpublished manuscript.

Ritsner M. & Ponizovsky, A. (1998). Psychological symptoms among an immigrant population: a prevalence study. Comprehensive Psychiatry, 39 (1), 21-27.

Rotenberg, V., Tobin, M., Drause, D., & Lubovkov, I. (1996). Psychosocial problems faced during absorption of Russian-speaking new immigrants into Israel: a systematic approach. Israeli Journal of Psychiatry Related Sciences, 33 (1), 40-49.

Saint-Exupery, Antoine de. (1971). The Little Prince. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace and Company.

Schlesinger, K. (1979). Jewish humour as Jewish identity. International Review of Psychoanalysis, 6, 317-330.

Shemesh, A.A., Horowitz, R., Levinson, D., & Popper, M. (1993). Psychiatric hospitalization of immigrants to Israel from the Former USSR: assessment of demand in future waves of immigration. Israeli Journal of Psychiatry Related Sciences, 30 (4), 213-222.

Simakhodskaya, Z. (2000). Russian Revised NEO-PI-R: Concordant Validity and Relationship to Acculturation. Poster presented August 4, 2000 at the 108th Convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington DC.

Slonim-Nevo, V. & Sheraga, Y. (1997). Social and psychological adjustment of Soviet-born and Israeli-born adolescents: The effect of the family. Israeli Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences, 34(2), 128-138.

Smith, J. (1990). Self-construction: Longitudinal Studies in the Psychology of Personal Identity and Life Transitions. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, United Kingdom.

Stern, D.N. (1985). The Interpersonal World of the Infant. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Strauss, A. (1959). Mirrors and Masks: The search for identity. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of Qualitative Research. Newbury Park: SAGE publications.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Sullivan, H.S. (1953). The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry. New York, NY: Norton.

White, M. (1998). Liberating Conversations: New dimensions in narrative therapy. Paper presented at Family Therapy Network Symposium. Washington, DC.

Winnicott, D. W. (1971). Playing and Reality. New York, NY: Routledge.

Yaglom, M. (1991). The impact of loss and mourning on Soviet immigrant teenagers and their families: Some implications for clinical practice. In Soviet Refugee Health and Mental Health: Twenty years of Soviet resettlement. Conference proceedings, Chicago, IL.

Yaglom, M. (1993). Role of psychocultural factors in the adjustment of Soviet Jewish refugees: applying Kleinian theory of mourning. Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 23(2), 135-145.

Yeh, E.K. (1976). Cross-cultural adaptation and personal growth: the case of Chinese students. Acta Psychologica Taiwanica, 18, 95-104.

Zaborowski, D.L. (1999). The Migratory Process of Brazilians Living in Los Angeles: an analysis of subjective experiences. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wright Institute Graduate School of Psychology, California.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.