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Parenting experiences of Eastern European immigrant professionals in the U.S.: a qualitative study

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PARENTING EXPERIENCES OF EASTERN EUROPEAN
IMMIGRANT PROFESSIONALS IN THE U.S.:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Ecology

by

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ABSTRACT

In 2004, the nation's foreign-born population numbered approximately 35 million comprising about 12% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Most studies of immigrants primarily research the two largest immigrant groups, those from Latin America and Asia, while little has been done with the less visible population of immigrants from Eastern Europe. Also, we know much about the experiences of low-income immigrants of color, but little about the experiences of white immigrant families in the professional ranks. A qualitative study was conducted with immigrant professionals from Eastern Europe to explore their experiences with raising children in a new sociocultural environment.

A grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used for data collection and analysis. The participants (N=24) were interviewed in depth on the topics of adaptation to the host country; changes in the family as a result of immigration; participants' perceptions of the differences of raising children in their countries of origin and the U.S.; the adjustments they had to make in a new context; education and language issues; relationships with children and conflict; cultural identity and acculturation. Based on the analysis, seven major themes emerged: (1) Education: "Education is a big goal, a means of establishing one's life"; (2) Language: "He answers in English, and this breaks my heart"; (3) Ethnic identity and biculturalism: "I don't think our kids are torn between two worlds... We are"; (4) Grandparents and extended family: "In our culture, the grandparents are very involved with grandchildren, their daily upbringing"; (5) Time bind: "You don't have a lot of time for your kids here, and you need to live with that"; (6) Environmental influences: "We were not guided in our life that much by media and

television; we got our [role] models from the family, books”; (7) Discipline, independence, self-esteem, and confidence: “As a parent, you have to know how to keep it in balance.” Narratives from the participants provide illustrations of the processes that occur in the family system due to a change in the context of living. Implications for practitioners and directions for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau estimates for 2006, every 31 seconds one person is being added to the U.S. population as a result of net international migration. In 2004, the nation's foreign-born population numbered approximately 35 million comprising about 12% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Many of the immigrants are parents of children who are either immigrants or, more commonly, U.S. citizens themselves. By 2000, one out of every five children in the United States lived in an immigrant family (Hernandez, 2004; Haskins, Greenberg, & Fremstad, 2004). Considering that 1 in 10 Americans alive today is foreign-born, it is increasingly important to understand how culturally diverse families interact with and adapt to their host environment (Sherif Trask & Hamon, 2007). Hareven (2000) emphasizes the need to study "the family and individuals *in time and place*" (p. xv), and identifies two of the most promising areas of research: how a family initiates and adapts to changes and how it interprets the impact of the larger social changes into its own operations. These are two aims of this dissertation.

Today's immigrants to the United States hail from over 140 different countries. However, throughout history some regions and countries have sent far more immigrants than others. Researchers distinguish between two massive waves of immigration. The first wave was in the period between 1901 and 1910, when 97% of children of immigrants had origins in Europe and Canada (Hernandez, 2004). Since the middle of the 20th century, the proportion of immigrants from the more developed countries such as Canada and many European nations has declined. At the same time, less developed countries are sending more and more immigrants to the U.S., including illegal ones

(Booth, Crouter, & Landale, 1997; Rumbaut, 1997). By 2000, 84 % of immigrant children had their origins in either Latin America or Asia (Hernandez, 2004).

Among the foreign-born population of the U.S., 53% were born in Latin America, 25% in Asia, 14% in Europe, and the remaining 8% in other regions of the world, such as Africa and Oceania (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Immigration requires many life changes from individuals and families because immigrants have to adjust to new values, norms, and patterns of interaction in the host society that are often in conflict with those of their countries of origin. As the demography of the U.S. changes, it is increasingly important to consider this immigrant population and their experiences with acculturation to the host country (Booth et al., 1997).

In many people's minds, the United States represents a prototypical "nation of immigrants." However, increased migration is a global trend in which most other developed nations are sustaining similar increases in immigration. Immigrants comprise more than 15% of the population in more than 50 countries, and contribute significantly to the population and employment growth in most developed countries (Haskins et al., 2004). Globalization, or an expansion of economic forces beyond national borders, brings technological innovation, economic advances, and a rising worldwide trend in international migration (Sandis, 2004). Nowadays, more countries are involved in international migration than in the past, and migration flows are becoming increasingly diverse as migrants possess a wide spectrum of skill levels, from the labor proletariat to the "brain drain" elites.

Migration is an event that has been studied by many disciplines, each focusing on a particular aspect of the experience, each one typically using its own distinct

methodology (Laosa, 1997). Thus, demography, economics, public policy, sociology, psychology, education, anthropology, and public health illuminate only a part of the migration or immigration event (Berry, 2001). The discipline of human ecology, with its focus on the family system adapting to its environment, is in a strategically beneficial position to examine the processes occurring in the family resulting from the change of the context of living (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Examining the influences from the larger sociocultural systems of the host culture may aid in better understanding of how immigrant families adapt to a new culture and resolve competing cultural values and expectations, especially as they parent their children in a new environment.

As Olson and DeFrain (2003) note, immigration inevitably puts individuals and families in a difficult psychological position. Immigrants come to the U.S. in search of a better life, attracted by the strengths of American culture and its abundant educational and economic opportunities. At the same time, because immigrants can use their “home” culture as a frame of reference to compare with American culture, they are often in a better position than Americans to identify, by comparison, strengths and weaknesses of their host sociocultural environment (Olson & DeFrain, 2003). Thus, immigrant families are confronted by the difficult decision of how to reconcile the two worlds: what features of American life should they adopt, and what parts of their cultural heritage, or their “backhome,” should they preserve, and how can they do that?

Acculturation, or the process of adapting to a new culture, is one of the major issues for immigrant families in the United States. Research indicates that family members acculturate at a difference pace: children go through this process and become

Americanized more rapidly than their parents (Falicov, 2003; Gold, 1989; Portes, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This disparity is often associated with a decrease in parental authority and control (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1994; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981), especially as children become translators of the language and the culture to their parents (Buki, Ma, Strom, & Strom, 2003; Rumbaut, 1997). While parents support their children in acquiring education and “cultural competency” to succeed in the new society, they often fight hard to prevent negative influences of the society from entering the family system (Buriel & DeMent, 1997, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). The conflict between old and new values is particularly difficult for parents to reconcile because they immigrated for the purpose of giving their children more opportunities and a better life than they would have had in their native countries.

Hard work and determination to succeed are among the major strengths and assets of many immigrant groups (Booth et al., 1997; Olson & DeFrain, 2003). However, the process of assimilation into the host culture can erode traditional immigrant values (Shields, & Behrman, 2004). For example, research on academic achievements and aspirations among immigrant children provides evidence of the erosion of social capital. Initially, when comparing grades, achievement test scores, and college aspirations, immigrant and second generation students (native-born children of immigrant parents) score higher than U.S.-born students of U.S.-born parents (Rumbaut, 1995; Matute-Bianchi, 1986). These findings are attributed to cultural resources and immigrant parents’ optimism about their children’s prospects in a new country (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001), as well as more time spent on homework by the children of immigrants (Shields, & Behrman, 2004). However, with longer residence in

the U.S. and in successive generations, English language skills improve while scholastic performance, work habits, and aspirations among children decline (Jensen & Chitose, 1997; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Kao, 1995; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Rumbaut, 1995, 1997; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Waters, 1997). It is essential to investigate whether and why some immigrant groups and families are able to sustain their social capital and high educational aspirations under the often conflicting and stressful conditions of living in a new culture.

Common Resources and Challenges for Immigrant Families

There is a great deal of diversity among immigrant families. They represent numerous political, occupational, and religious groups, and may have very different experiences in adaptation to the host country. Each of these groups has its own characteristics, distinctive resources, and unique vulnerabilities (Rumbaut, 1997). Upon arrival in the host country, immigrant families are confronted with a dramatically different social context from the one they had in their home country. The impact of the challenges on the family system depends on many factors: family structure, ethnicity, culture, reasons for immigration, socioeconomic status, and English proficiency, to name just a few (Booth et al., 1997; McGoldrick, 1993; Sherif Trask & Hamon, 2007).

When considering families that move through an immigration experience, researchers differentiate between various levels of stressors (Bush, Bohon, & Kim, 2005; Pedraza & Rumbaut, 1996). On an individual level, immigrants may have to deal with identity issues, isolation, depression, or a change of status. On a family level, potential stressors might come from the changes in gender-roles as immigration often places women in the earning position, or from conflict between generations as family members commonly adjust to a new life at a different pace (Gold, 1989; Kwak, 2003). In addition

to the psychological demands of international relocation and family level changes, immigrants have to learn to navigate new health care, education, economic and legal institutions in the host country (Falicov, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). On the societal level, immigration policies and discrimination may pose additional stressors (Portes, 1996).

Although immigrants are extremely diverse and each group has its unique challenges, resources, and strengths, there are several barriers that to some extent are common for immigrants. Bush and colleagues (2005) provide a summary of such stressors: the language barrier, diminished social support networks, conflict in intergenerational relationships, conflict and change in marital relationships, poor housing conditions, lack of familiarity with U.S. norms, discrimination, inadequate public policies and programs, and lack of economic resources. It is been well documented that a transition from the collectivistic culture to a more individualistic one is difficult for immigrants, regardless of their country of origin: India (Patel et al., 1996, Pettys & Balgopal, 1998), China (Cheng Gorman, 1998; Xie, Xia, & Zhou, 2005), Jordan (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1994), Eastern Europe (Gold, 1989; Kovalcic, 1996), any other collectivistic culture (Bush et al., 2005; Kwak, 2003).

Fortunately, these challenges are counterbalanced to some extent by several common resources found in immigrant families on three different levels: individual, family, and societal (Bush et al., 2005; Pedraza & Rumbaut, 1996; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Education, knowledge of the English language, financial reserves, and familiarity with the social norms of the U.S. are among resources helpful on an individual level. On a family level, immigrants can draw upon their shared family

traditions and values, religion, and perseverance (Falicov, 2003). Society level resources include supportive immigration policies and programs, social support networks, and services found in ethnic enclaves and communities, although some scholars point that the latter can be potentially a barrier to an immigrant's successful adaptation to the host country (Bush et al., 2005; Portes, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In the course of this study, I am interested in exploring which of these common barriers and resources will be salient for my participants, immigrant professionals from Eastern Europe, particularly with respect to parenting.

Classification of Immigrants

The term “immigrants” comprises individuals who are foreign-born and plan to settle permanently in the United States, as well as students in U.S. universities who live in the country long-term but temporarily (Bush et al., 2005). There are three broad categories of immigrants that have been commonly used in the literature:

- 1) voluntary economic migrants who arrive in the U.S. in search of better job opportunities and higher pay;
- 2) family migrants who usually come to join family members already residing in the U.S.;
- 3) involuntary migrants, such as refugees, who are escaping their home countries' political violence, wars, or environmental devastation.

A prominent scholar of immigration, Ruben Rumbaut (1997), offers a more helpful, although not exhaustive, classification of contemporary immigrants to the U.S., which I prefer to the categories above for several reasons. First, category two, family migrants, does not tell the whole story. The decision to immigrate has always been

heavily influenced by family events and processes (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918) and *is* a family affair, whether the move to the U.S. is being realized through refugee status or through family reunification. Second, Rumbaut's classification reflects recent trends in the immigration flows to this country and explicitly distinguishes undocumented laborers, a group which has been steadily increasing. Thus, the following are the three types of contemporary U.S. immigrants as described by Rumbaut (1997):

- 1) political refugees and asylees;
- 2) highly skilled professionals, executives, and managers;
- 3) undocumented laborers.

The experiences of the first and the third groups of immigrants have received a great deal of attention from researchers (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1991; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Portes, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). However, the second group of immigrants, professionals and highly skilled workers, has been largely ignored. This sizable minority of well-educated immigrants that characterizes contemporary immigration is the focus of this study and, as such, will make a contribution to the literature. A brief overview of highly skilled immigrants and their place in the U.S. society is provided in the next section.

Immigrant Professionals

Immigrant professionals enter the U.S. as either employees of U.S. companies or as students who may later adjust their status through marriage to a U.S. citizen or by gaining employment with U.S. employers (Rumbaut, 1997). Educated immigrants who arrive to the U.S. for professional opportunities often come in nuclear units; they also are more likely to be geographically dispersed because they tend to live where they find

employment. Because immigrant professionals are less likely to reside in ethnic communities where they can speak their native language, celebrate holidays, and keep connected to their “own” people, they are thrust into high levels of interaction with the U.S.-born population (McGoldrick, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Such circumstances provide families of immigrant professionals with more opportunities for assimilation into the host culture, but also more challenges in preserving their native language and culture.

Contrary to popular belief, immigrants today are generally more educated and skilled than they were in the past. However, the composition of contemporary immigrant population is bimodal: there is a large portion of workers with little education and another substantial population with college and advanced degrees, often some of the best and brightest of their native nations (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). The number of immigrants in the professional ranks has increased dramatically since the introduction of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, which aimed at two goals: recruitment of immigrants with needed skills and resources, and increased priority for family reunification (Rumbaut, 1997). The act resulted in the immigration of a great number of engineers, computer scientists, doctors, university professors, and investors into the United States.

What place do these immigrant professionals occupy in the United States? Portes and Rumbaut (1996) provide a summary of the presence of immigrants in professional occupations in the U.S. In the mid-1970s, immigrants comprised one fifth of all U.S. physicians. In the mid-1980s, more than half of all doctoral degrees in engineering from the U.S. universities were awarded to foreign-born students, many of whom stayed to live in the United States. At that time, every third engineer with a doctoral degree working in

the U.S. industry was an immigrant. In the mid-1990s, well over three quarters of engineering professors in U.S. universities were foreign-born, “including the majority of assistant professors under thirty-five years of age” (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, p. 222).

The proportion of foreign-born students in the fields of science and engineering continues to rise steadily. Thirty two percent of all information-technology professionals in California’s Silicon Valley are immigrants, and half of all entering physics graduate students in 1998 were foreign-born (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Between the 1990 and 2000, the proportion of foreign-born workers in science and engineering occupations in the U.S. rose from 11 to 17 percent for graduates with bachelor’s degrees, from 19 to 29 percent for graduates with master’s degrees, and from 24 to 38 percent for graduates with PhD’s degrees (Friedman, 2005). Yet, little is known about the experiences of highly educated immigrants and their families in the United States.

Immigrant Groups

In the literature on immigrants, the following terms are generally used to differentiate between the generations of immigrants (Bush et al., 2005; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Portes, 1996; Rumbaut, 1997).

- 1) The “first generation” immigrants – foreign-born individuals who immigrate to the United States. Immigrant children are those born abroad who come to the U.S. after infancy to be raised here.
- 2) The “second generation” immigrants – U.S.-born children of immigrant parents. Some researchers may be less conservative in this definition and thus broaden this category to include children born abroad who come here at

a very early age, commonly before adolescence; this group is often referred to as the “1.5 generation.”

- 3) The “third,” or “native,” generation – U.S.-born children of U.S.-born parents, or grandchildren of the first-generation immigrants.

The experiences of the first and second generation immigrants will be addressed throughout this work. The next section, which concludes chapter one, will point to several gaps in the literature on immigrants.

Gaps in Previous Research

Most studies of immigrants primarily researched the two largest immigrant groups, those from Latin America and Asia, while little has been done with the less visible population of immigrants from Eastern Europe. This trend is obvious in recent, high-profile volumes in family science. For example, *Handbook of Contemporary Families* addresses the following ethnic groups: Latinos, African-Americans, Asians, American Indians, and Muslims (Coleman & Ganong, 2004); *Handbook of Marriage and the Family* discusses Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Puerto-Ricans, African-Americans, and Amish Americans (Sussman, Steinmetz, & Peterson, 1999); and *Families and Change* covers Latino and Asian immigrant families (McKenry & Price, 2005). A search of the major social sciences databases such as PsycINFO, Eric Abstracts, and Sociological Abstracts revealed few studies of Eastern European immigrants in the United States.

In addition, we know much about the experiences of low-income immigrants of color, and stories of poverty, discrimination, hardships, limited English language skills, and life in ethnic enclaves, but little about the experiences of white immigrant families in

the professional ranks with good income. Thus, there is a need for research focused on this understudied group – immigrant professionals from Eastern Europe, and their experiences with raising children in the United States.

Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine the acculturation experience, related to child rearing in a new sociocultural environment, of the first-generation Eastern European immigrant parents in the United States, from their own perspective. Specifically, I am interested in examining how the process of acculturation has affected participants' parenting and family life. How do these immigrant parents perceive their host environment? What compromises do they make in adopting American ways of life and yet preserving their own cultural traditions? How can we better understand their experiences of raising children in a new sociocultural environment? Finally, what can American scholars and family practitioners, as well as parents, both immigrant and native, learn from them?

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter begins with three primary sections: 1) a brief overview of Eastern European families; 2) a theoretical discussion of the adaptation of immigrants in the U.S.; 3) a description of common issues that arise in immigrant families related to the effects of immigration on family dynamics and parenting practices. The chapter concludes with a review of studies on the three most commonly considered aspects of acculturation, specifically: 1) language and bilingualism; 2) immigrant ethnic identity; and 3) academic achievement and motivation among immigrant youth.

Eastern European Families

In this section, I will describe what is meant by the term “Eastern Europe”, and provide some background information on Eastern European families. Although there is great diversity among the populations of the countries in this region, it is possible to outline several general features that stem from a common political past, and which may be helpful in understanding the families who come to the U.S. from Eastern Europe. A brief overview of family relations and childrearing practices of Eastern European families will also be provided.

Eastern Europe encompasses all European countries that were previously ruled by the Communist regime, the so-called former “Eastern Bloc.” The image of an “Iron Curtain” separating “Western Europe” and Soviet-controlled “Eastern Europe” was dominant throughout the period of the Cold War, which lasted from the end of the Second World War until about 1989 (Wikipedia contributors, 2006). The following alphabetically listed countries are most commonly included in Eastern Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Republic

of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, as well as several countries that formerly were part of the Soviet Union: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. Each of these countries has its own language, but they all are commonly united in the Balto-Slavic language family. The vast majority of the population of Eastern Europe, at least nominally, belongs to the Christian Orthodox faith.

Families of the Eastern European region experienced major socio-political and economic changes including World Wars I and II and the fall of communism. The communist political framework was imposed on the population of these countries, and it permeated all levels of society, strongly impacting individual and family life. On a societal level, there were numerous negative aspects of the communist regime. They included human rights violations; pro-Communist propaganda and censorship of opposing views; the presence of multiple civilian informants and incarceration of the critics of the Communist system; forced labor camps, genocides of certain ethnic minorities, deliberate mass starvations; and widespread destruction of cultural heritage (Wikipedia contributors, 2006). Any expression of religion was prohibited and suppressed by “militant atheism” whereby churches and other religious monuments were destroyed and religious people were deported to Siberia (Bodrug-Lungu, 2004).

The positive features of the Communist system included guaranteed employment, universal health care, free housing to the citizens, and generous social and cultural programs. In addition, its universal education programs resulted in high levels of literacy among Eastern Europeans, and high levels of scientific research (Wikipedia contributors, 2006). Under the communist system, gender equality in education and labor force participation was strongly promoted, and the vast majority of families consisted of dual-

earner spouses, even though women carried the sole responsibility for childcare and household labor (Robila, 2004). The state provided a uniform family support system with a network of quality standardized child-care facilities, child allowances, and maternity leave to parents (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Pearson, 1990).

With the collapse of the Communist system, Eastern European countries underwent a painful and confusing process of transition from Communism and a centrally planned economy to democracy and market-regulated economy. It resulted in increased levels of unemployment, poverty, inflation, deterioration of living conditions, and a huge income gap between the rich and the poor. These factors, in turn, brought about a demographic crisis with rapidly declining populations due to decreases in fertility rates and life expectancy. The changes in the society profoundly affected many people whose education became obsolete as their planned careers simply disappeared as a result of the massive restructuring of the economy (Robila, 2004). Many younger families chose to migrate to more developed Western countries.

From the collection of the articles in a (rare) edited volume on Eastern European families (Robila, 2004), one can discern that in spite of their diversity, there are many similarities among the families of Eastern Europe in terms of their life and parenting practices. Eastern European parents are highly involved in the lives of their children, who play a central role in the family. Over the years, as the society underwent multiple transformations from a communist system to a democracy, the childbearing practices of the parents have also been changing. Submission to authority used to be particularly important: children were expected to unquestionably respect and obey their parents (Zhurzhenko, 2004). Nowadays, more liberal parenting practices oriented to the

promotion of freedom, independence in decision-making, and self-reliance in children are emerging (Lakinska & Bornarova, 2004). The major goal of Eastern European parents, however, has been and still is to provide their children with the best education possible. Education is highly valued and desired among Eastern Europeans, not so much for the purpose of economic advancement, but because of the social respect and prestige that are associated with it (Robila, 2004).

Eastern Europeans place a high value on extended and kin family connection, interdependence, and cooperation. For a person from Eastern Europe, a family traditionally means more than only immediate family members, and often includes at least three generations that reside in the same household (Staykova, 2004). In contrast to American middle-class values of independence, individualism, and assertiveness, Eastern Europeans value interdependence, collectivism, and cohesion (Robila, 2004). In the vast majority of families with young children, grandparents often take the responsibility for a day-to-day childcare. Elders in the family are respected by the younger family members (Staykova, 2004; Zhurzhenko, 2004). Over the last century, however, due to industrial, political, and economic processes, traditional multigenerational families have been gradually replaced with nuclear families.

Theories of Immigrant Adaptation

Theories of adaptation of the immigrants to U.S. society were first developed in connection with the immigrants from southern and eastern Europe from 1880 to 1925. Two major processes are commonly used to explain family functioning and adaptation to a new society: acculturation and assimilation. *Acculturation* is a process of adjusting to a new culture through changing one's values, attitudes, behaviors, interactions, and

relationships (Berry, 2001). It usually involves the ability to speak English, acceptance and promotion of American ideas, and generational status. *Assimilation* is a unidirectional process of adopting cultural norms and standards of the host society while relinquishing those of one's own ethnic group (Gordon, 1964).

Straight-line assimilation theory predicts that ethnic and racial minorities will in time blend with the mainstream culture and become indistinguishable from the native populations (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1914; Warner & Srole, 1945). There are four stages of ethnic groups' assimilation into American society: after the (1) initial *contact* of ethnic groups and a (2) period of *conflict* and competition for resources, (3) immigrants are forced to change and adapt to the new environment; the mainstream *accommodates* the minority group, and then (4) the minority group learns to *assimilate* into the mainstream (Berry, 2001; Park, 1914).

Further, Berry (2001) proposes that four patterns of acculturation include assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. *Assimilation* consists of giving up one's ethnic identity, heritage, and cultural values in favor of those of the host culture. *Integration* is achieved through finding a balance between preserving one's culture and values and participating in the host culture. *Separation* is a result of the strong desire to maintain one's ethnic identity and avoid interaction with the host culture. The last pattern of acculturation, *marginalization*, is defined as maintaining no contact with the home culture due to little interest or possibility, and having no contact with the host culture due to discrimination.

With their study of the ethnic groups in an American town called *Yankee City*, Warner and Srole (1945) also made a contribution to the straight-line assimilation theory

in their book, which “tells part of the magnificent history of the adjustment of the ethnic groups to American Life” (p. 2). Having examined Irish, French, Canadian, Jewish, Italian, Armenian, Greek, Polish, and Russian ethnic groups, Warner and Srole (1945) predict that each native-born generation will acculturate further and raise its status in relation to the previous generation, in the process of a rapid cultural Americanization. Thus, succeeding generations of children of immigrants would either vanish in the American world, or would be on their way to assimilation despite the attempts of the community to maintain an ethnic personality by organizing groups around churches and schools. Warner and Srole’s (1945) study, by their own admission, was most concerned with analyzing the facts of the ethnic systems, while no attempts were made to describe the actual life experiences of the members of an ethnic group.

In 1964, Gordon extended the theory with more types of assimilation. He theorized that cultural assimilation, or acculturation, occurs when the values, beliefs, and language of the dominant culture are adopted; in fact, the acculturation process continues together with other types of assimilation. The most crucial process, structural assimilation, develops when immigrant ethnic groups become members of the primary group of natives and their organizations. At this point the ethnic group disappears and its distinctive values evaporate (Gordon, 1964). On the way to that destination, however, immigrants go through other types of assimilation. Marital assimilation occurs when higher rates of intermarriage take place between the migrant and dominant ethnic groups. The identification assimilation happens when individuals no longer see themselves as distinctive and, just like members of the dominant groups, participate in the mainstream institutions of a society. At this point, Gordon (1964) predicts, prejudice and

discrimination cease to be a problem because there are no value conflicts between the ethnic minority and dominant ethnic group. By the third generation, white ethnic groups are close to finalizing the assimilation, although for non-white ethnic groups, this process may take much longer. Overall, Gordon argued that various ethnic groups blend together in the “multiple melting pot” (Gordon, 1964, p. 131).

Nowadays, however, the validity of the straight-line assimilation theory is being questioned. The theory has been criticized for its lack of interest in identity, as people also construct their own acculturation and assimilation. Because of the theory’s macro-sociological bias it ignored the micro-sociological process of the actual acculturation of immigrants and their children (Gans, 1992). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) add to the criticism that, in reality, the process of assimilation is “neither simple nor inevitable” (p. 45). They correctly point out that American society is not homogeneous, and that immigrants, even if of the same nationality, are heterogeneous in terms of their social class, timing of arrival to the U.S., and number of generations away from immigration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

The straight-line theory made more sense at the time of its creation for the immigration flows from Europe in early twentieth century, when there was a powerful pressure towards Americanization. These days, ethnic diversity in the United States holds a higher national value, and “multiculturalism has created an environment more receptive of diversity” (Tuan, 1995, p. 111). Also, nowadays the majority of immigrants come from Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, with their considerably different cultures and physical appearances. Last, but not least, scholars point out that the United States today is a very different society from the one that welcomed southern and eastern Europeans at

the beginning of the twentieth century (Gans, 1992; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes, 1995), and today's second generation is growing up in a different country with fewer economic opportunities for advancement.

Instead of a straightforward, linear path of assimilation, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) offer a more contemporary view of the assimilation process. They call it *segmented assimilation*, which comes with a range of possible outcomes: dissonant, consonant, or selective assimilation. These outcomes depend on multiple factors: family and community resources, history of the first generation immigrants, barriers faced by the second generation, and pace of assimilation among parents and children. Scholars maintain that both parents and children have to be considered in this dynamic process.

Dissonant acculturation occurs when children lose their parents' culture and learn American ways and the English language at a much faster rate than their parents. This situation undermines parental authority as a result of role reversal when children help their parents navigate the host society. *Consonant acculturation* represents the situation, in which both parents and children abandon their native language and culture at about the same pace. This is a common state among parents in professional occupations who rapidly become incorporated into mainstream institutions. It is also characterized by the unity of parents and children in confronting outside challenges. The third possibility, *selective acculturation*, happens when both parents and children partially retain their native language, norms, and culture. This type of assimilation is associated with less parent-child conflict, having friends of the same ethnicity, and full bilingualism among second generation children. A necessary condition for this outcome, however, is the

presence of a large community of the same ethnicity, and availability of surrounding institutional diversity that would slow down the cultural shift (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

The issues of the adaptation of immigrants and their children and their long-term effect on the U. S. are on the minds of policy makers, educators, researchers, and concerned citizens. A central question is to what segment of American society the new immigrants and their children will assimilate? (Portes, 1995, 1996; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). As mentioned earlier, immigrant literature distinguishes between the “old immigration,” which spanned from 1880 to 1925, and the “new immigration,”¹ which began after 1965 and is characterized by relatively high degrees of racial and ethnic diversity (Gans, 1992). The “old” immigrants and their offspring (mostly from Europe and Canada) adapted to the host society relatively well, due to enormous demand for industrial labor, which did not require education, during a period of economic growth in the first three decades of the twentieth century (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

The new immigrants are much more ethnically, socioculturally, and linguistically diverse than those before: over 20 million immigrants have entered the U.S. since 1965, mostly from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia. They are facing the challenges that accompany changes in the U.S. economy: it is not growing as fast as it used to, and does not provide many good jobs with opportunities for advancement (Portes, 1996; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Many second-generation children are thus concentrated in inner cities with prevailing high poverty rates and declining job opportunities. Both

¹ For clarity it is important to mention, however, that the simplistic terms “old” and “new” immigration are relative and depend on the time-frame used in the course of the 400 years of immigration. Lately, the term “new” immigration has been used widely in regards to the end of the 20th-century immigration from Latin America and Asia, while in the past, early 1880s were the boundary of the “old” immigrants (from northern Europe) and “new” immigrants (from southern and eastern Europe) (Purcell, 1995).

these issues are problematic for the successful adaptation of the new second generation in the U.S. (Portes, 1995; Jensen & Chitose, 1994).

Gans (1992) suggests two possible scenarios for the future of children of the new immigrants. A negative scenario is one of downward mobility. It proposes that children of poor immigrants, particularly nonwhites, may not get good jobs and may not be willing to work long-hours at low-wage jobs as their parents did because they will have become Americanized in their attitudes about work and income expectations. This change will bring them to the company of poor Blacks and Hispanics who are excluded from the mainstream economy, and make them liabilities on the shoulders of the U.S. citizens. A positive scenario includes upward mobility through education, or inheritance of their parents' businesses and jobs (Gans, 1992).

Compared to children of other immigrant types, children of immigrant professionals possess high degrees of what sociologists call "human capital," represented by parental education, job experience, and language knowledge, and "social capital," symbolized by networks and connections (Coleman, 1988). Because of their advantages in human and social capital, immigrant professionals are more likely to be competitive and succeed occupationally and economically in the host country. This, in turn, allows them to provide necessary financial and educational resources to their children. Parents with adequate resources can settle in more integrated and affluent neighborhoods that typically offer good schools for their children, an important element in shaping children's prospects (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Children in immigrant families with more resources may also have the luxury to "adopt a more relaxed stance" toward their future (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 59).

Eastern European immigrants and their children, compared to immigrants from Asia or Latin America, have another advantage. Based on the assimilation theory, as outlined by Warner and Srole (1945), they may receive a warmer reception and will integrate faster into the host society because they are similar to the host society's mainstream in their physical appearance, class background, language, and religion.

Overall, scholars maintain that the term acculturation is too narrow, and that people do not acculturate into a single, monolithic culture which does not exist in reality. The U.S. is far too diverse as a nation to be considered a single culture. According to this thinking, researchers of today's second generation are encouraged to break the host country into several pieces, for example, institutional and cultural sectors, that the second generation comes into contact with the most, and to examine ongoing processes within these sectors. New immigration seems to be a great opportunity to conduct micro-sociological ethnographic studies based on interviews with the immigrants and their children about all the aspects of adapting to America. Such studies could be instrumental in learning about the process of acculturation. The present research examines the effects of America, both formal Americanization (through schooling) and the informal Americanization (through peers, the media and the many other cultural influences) that influence the second generation.

The Impact of Immigration on Parenting

The immigration process poses significant challenges to families, particularly in the areas of parent-child relationships and intergenerational conflict. The conflict is often based on the more rapid acculturation among children compared to that of their parents. Research shows that in general children in immigrant families usually learn to speak

English much faster than their parents and then serve as translators for them (Falicov, 200; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This situation reverses the family roles and breaks generational boundaries by giving more power to children and leaving parents dependent and frustrated. Such processes are more characteristic for immigrants with low levels of education, while immigrant parents in professional occupations who have a good command of English language are less likely to undergo the role reversal with their children. Nevertheless, many parents feel that the cultural environment of the U.S. undermines their authority by influencing their children through television, school, and peers. When immigrant children learn American ways much faster than their parents do, this can create a clash between old and new values, making parents fearful of “losing” their children to the host culture (Baptiste, 1993; Buriel & DeMent, 1997; Kovalcik, 1996; Usita, 2007; Wakil et al., 1981).

Thus, upon arrival to a new country, immigrant parents face the challenge of adjusting to a new and unfamiliar sociocultural environment in which they have to raise their children. What specific issues related to parenting arise in this new context? Next, several studies that examine experiences of immigrant parents are reviewed. Due to the qualitative nature of the present work, I am particularly interested in focusing on those studies that utilize qualitative methodology.

One study of the socialization of immigrant children from Indian and Pakistani families who immigrated to a Canadian city revealed some interesting compromises parents had to make between adopting Canadian, or Western, ways of life and retaining their cultural traditions (Wakil et al., 1981). The families studied represented the middle to upper-middle class stratum, with husbands in professional occupations: physicians,

professors, engineers, accountants, lawyers, and businessmen. Through interviews and participant observation of 136 individuals representing 50 immigrant families and their children age 12 and over, researchers found that three areas of socialization of children were the most salient: disciplinary and career decisions, dating and marriage, and “backhome” cultural identity. The major conflict stemmed from the differences in values: parents had been socialized in societies characterized by strong family ties, interdependence, and great respect for age and authority, while their second-generation Canadian children grew up accustomed to socioeconomic independence and individualism. The generation gap was further widened by the cultural values gap, leaving many children feeling caught up between two different cultures, and parents horrified by the “corrupting influences of the Western culture” that lead their children in the “wrong direction” (Wakil et al., 1981, p. 939).

These immigrant families, however, changed as a result of immigration, and, contrary to “backhome” traditions, girls were encouraged to get professional degrees and have careers. In terms of discipline, many parents also adopted the middle-class Canadian family as a frame of reference. On the other hand, parents were adamant in their refusal to accept casual dating and Western-type, love-based marriage. Instead, in many cases, spouses were “imported” from India and Pakistan through the means of traditional “matchmaking.” Overall, these immigrant families took a highly selective approach to socialization, whereby they willingly accepted changes in the more pragmatic aspects of their life (e.g., discipline, career choices) but strongly resisted alterations in their core cultural values related to dating, marriage, language, and the Muslim religion (Wakil et al., 1981).

Similarly, a selective approach towards children's socialization was found in two other studies of Indian immigrant parents in the U.S. Indian mothers were found to encourage development of "North American characteristics" in their children as they viewed those as more beneficial for their children's adaptation, while fathers pressed for the development of traditional Indian characteristics in their children, attempting to maintain the Indian culture and protect them from the negative influences of the host society (Patel, Power, & Bhavnagri, 1996). Indian parents report challenges of negotiating the issues of respect and assertiveness in their children, maintaining contact with the grandparents and transmitting the culture to their children. The common key strategy found among Indo-Americans is constantly negotiating which aspects of American culture to assimilate and which aspects to avoid (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998).

Hattar-Pollara and Meleis (1994) examined the experiences of Jordanian immigrant women parenting their adolescent children. From personal interviews with mothers, researchers learned that these women were struggling to balance two major tasks: helping their children integrate educationally and occupationally into a new community and, at the same time, maintaining their ethnic identity and Jordanian culture. The most salient theme was the attempt to ensure that children avoid the loss of honor and reputation, as these two qualities are highly valued among the members of this ethnic group. Jordanian parents were very intentional about controlling and restricting social activities, as well as the television viewing habits of their children. Several mothers' perceptions of the cultural disparity between their parenting and what they viewed as American parenting made them wonder whether they were unfairly restrictive towards their children. Because of very different societal values, some mothers even reported

feeling guilty and regretful for coming to the United States. Some mothers felt that they had failed to preserve Jordanian traditions such as respect for parents or to ensure traditional norms for their children's behavior. Overall, parenting in a new context was stressful for these Jordanian mothers as they reportedly experienced constant feelings of worry, despair, guilt, confusion, and a fear of losing control of their children (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1994).

As evidenced by many qualitative and quantitative studies, children typically acculturate to the U.S. much more rapidly than their parents do, and this in itself invites conflict in the family (Buki et al., 2003; Cheng Gorman, 1998). In a study of Chinese immigrant mothers of adolescents, all mothers indicated that their children were more acculturated than they were (Buki et al., 2003). Mothers who reported a larger acculturation gap between themselves and their children were less satisfied with their parenting. One of the major limitations of the study was the use of mothers' perceptions only to assess their acculturation levels as well as their children's. However, one noteworthy finding of this study was that mothers with more formal years of education had a smaller acculturation gap with their children. This situation was due to the fact that those immigrants who had come to the U.S. to advance their education for professional mobility were more likely to have better command of English, and to be Americanized through their exposure to the U.S. society at work or in educational settings (Buki et al., 2003).

Diminished parental authority following immigration may also be related to the change of the parents' socioeconomic status in the United States. In her study of 10 Soviet Jewish immigrants, Kovalcik (1996) found that, while all participants felt less

confident as parents in a new unfamiliar context, the feeling of loss and failure as parents was particularly acute among those participants whose social status decreased as a result of immigration to the United States. All the participants in the study were highly educated with at least a Master's degree, and some with a Doctorate. The theme of education was the most salient in their responses. The parents were concerned with providing their children with adequate opportunities for intellectual stimulation and education, but felt that the educational system in the U.S. was inferior to the Russian one. Among other important themes that emerged from the study were the co-parenting role of grandparents, the negative effects of television on childrearing, increased emphasis on early independence in American society (as compared to former Soviet society), different methods of discipline, change the use of time, socialization and friendship, and the Americanization of children (Kovalcik, 1996). The researcher concluded that parenting and family processes are heavily influenced by cultural beliefs, values, and norms.

The influence of ethnicity and culture on the family dynamics in immigrant families is enormous. Cultural diversity represents a fine balance between validating whatever differences exist among people and appreciating people's common humanity, because "normal" is never more than a point of view" (McGoldrick, 1993, p. 332). For example, Chinese parenting has often been described as "authoritarian" while the reality is that the concept of "authoritarian" parenting is ethnocentric and may not accurately depict parenting among Chinese immigrants; a better way of understanding these ethnic group would be through their attitudes and beliefs that are culturally based (Cheng Gorman, 1998; Sherif Trask & Hamon, 2007). Overall, the more harmony there is between the norms of the host culture and those of the "home" culture, the easier the

adjustment to a new country will be for immigrants. And, as evidenced by the above review of studies of immigrants from countries with distinct, non-Western values, the larger the distance between the cultures, the more ground there is for conflict (Buki et al., 2003; Cheng Gorman, 1998; Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1994; Wakil et al., 1981).

The present work examines the process of adaptation to the U.S. by immigrants from Eastern European countries and describes the challenges they face regarding parenting their children in the new sociocultural environment. But first, below is a review of studies on the three most commonly studied topics of immigrant adaptation: 1) language, 2) ethnic identity, and 3) children's education.

Language

Language represents a means of communication and interaction, and forms a basis for social relations among people. However, language is much more than that. Childhood acquisition of language is related to the development of one's identity. Who we are is shaped in part by what language we speak (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994). At present, there are about 5,000 languages spoken in the world (Harding & Riley, 1986), or about 30 times as many languages as there are countries, which means that there will always be bilingualism, despite the attempts of countries to maintain linguistic unity (Hakuta, 1986). Bilingualism is also supported by the advances in international travel and trade, global communications, immigration, and overall trends towards globalization.

When immigrants enter a host country, they are expected to undergo acculturation and subsequently assimilate with the native population, and the key element of this process is negotiating the language use. The difficulty of the situation is that immigrants' native language is at the core of their "sense of self-worth and national pride" (Portes &

Rumbaut, 2001, p. 113). On the other hand, their new homeland implicitly requires that they abandon their cultural heritage and learn the new culture and new language. There are two reasons why language assimilation is required of foreigners: instrumental, to learn new means of communication; and symbolic, to show their desire to be admitted into the new country and leave behind their past loyalties (Fishman, 1978).

Because language makes up the essence of not only individual, but also national identity, host countries resist the activities of groups that would like to use foreign languages. As Portes and Rumbaut (2001) note, particularly in the United States the pressure to learn and use American English has always been and still is great. One reason for this is that the U.S. is made up of people arriving from many different countries, and it lacks century-old traditions and culture that would be a unifying force. Therefore, language homogeneity carries out that unifying function. When one abandons foreign language and acquires nonaccented English, he passes a litmus test of Americanization. Because both the transition of the children of immigrants to monolingualism, and the loss of the native languages have been so rapid in the United States, compared to other countries, some researchers have called the U.S. a “cemetery” for languages (Lieberson, Dalto, & Johnson, 1975, as cited in Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

While assimilating to the host country, most immigrants try to transmit to children their heritage – traditions, culture, cuisine, celebrations, and language. However, because of the many pressures to master and use American English, language is the least robust element of the generational legacies to survive in the process of adaptation to the United States. Linguists describe the exact route of the language loss across three generations. The first generation goes through instrumental acculturation; the second generation

speaks English in school and with friends, but increasingly answers parents in English at home, thus becoming limited bilinguals whose language of choice in adulthood becomes English; the third generation loses the remains of the first generation's native language due to lack of support for it both at home and in the outside environment (Fishman, 1978).

Scholars question whether such language acculturation with the resultant loss of a native language is a desirable outcome for children and society (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) found that in families where youth are not fluent in the language of their immigrant parents, there is more parent-child conflict, poor self-esteem and feelings of embarrassment on the part of youth about their parents' culture, and overall lower family cohesion compared with families where youth are fluent in their parents' language. Bilingualism seems a more advantageous alternative for families, which leads researchers to suggest that it neither poses a threat to the United States' unity nor excludes successful assimilation of immigrants and their children into the host society. But what is bilingualism, and what effect does it have on individual development, family relationships and society as a whole?

A review of the linguistic literature suggests that bilingualism or a bilingual individual are rather relative terms that can be defined on a continuum; it is the degree to which one masters the language that matters. Thus, ideally, a bilingual individual is a person "who speaks two languages perfectly" or has a "native-like control of two languages" (Harding & Riley, 1986, p. 31). At the other end of the continuum, a bilingual individual is a "speaker of one language who can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language" (Hakuta, 1986, p. 4). In reality, most bilingual speakers

are dominant in one language; very few people are balanced bilinguals (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994).

Many scholars note that in the U.S. being bilingual is associated with the lack of English ability, educational challenges, and a stigma of low socioeconomic status (Hakuta, 1986; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Such perceptions stem from the early research on bilingualism in immigrants conducted in the United States, mostly in the atmosphere of hostility to foreign influences. Early studies of bilingualism at the beginning of the 20th century all pointed to the negative effects of bilingualism on intelligence and cognitive development because immigrants performed poorly on tests of intelligence (Hakuta, 1986). The explanation was simple, however; they did not have a sufficient command of English language to understand the questions. Bilingualism was also seen as the source of mental retardation in the children of immigrants who were viewed as having a “language handicap” (Smith, 1939; as cited in Hakuta, 1986, p. 59). Among the flaws in the designs of these early studies was the fact that children of poor immigrants were compared to children of middle-class English-speaking parents; moreover, there was no clear confirmation that the subjects were indeed truly bilingual.

A shift in the view of bilingualism occurred after studies were done with the middle-class population in Canada and Europe, and researchers were motivated by an interest in finding whether or not there were positive effects of bilingualism. An often-cited landmark study of French Canadian children conducted by Peal and Lambert (1962) examined groups of monolingual and bilingual 10-year old children from the same French school system who were all equivalent in their socioeconomic status. The results showed that bilingual children performed better than monolingual children on both verbal

and nonverbal measures of intelligence, and that they had an advantage in concept formation and “cognitive flexibility.” This advantage for bilinguals in “cognitive flexibility” was attributed to the fact that bilinguals have more than one symbol for a concrete thing, which liberates them from the tyranny of words (Leopold, 1970). Further studies on the subject also found evidence of advantages for bilinguals in terms of academic performance and cognitive flexibility (see also Harding & Riley, 1986; Hakuta, 1986; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Later, however, researchers began to question the cause and effect relationship between intelligence and bilingualism: does the knowledge of several languages contribute to cognitive development, or is fluent bilingualism a consequence of greater cognitive abilities? Hakuta and Diaz (1985) conducted a study with poor Spanish-speaking, Puerto-Rican students immersed in bilingual education in the New Haven public schools. Through the comparison *within* a group of bilinguals (instead of *between* the groups, as was done previously), researchers found that those students who were more bilingual did better on various measures of cognitive ability than those students who were less bilingual (as cited in Hakuta, 1986). Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) also found that a high rate of retention of one’s parental language promoted academic achievement.

Overall, the evidence indicates that bilingualism is a positive trait for individual development in terms of cognitive abilities, academic performance, and expanding one’s intellectual horizons. Knowledge of more than one language is also a resource that gives immigrant and second-generation youth access to their parents’ ethnic capital and ethnic communities that was found to help with the U.S. school system (Glick & White, 2003).

In the global economy of today, the importance of education will continue to increase as a means for upward mobility (Gans, 1992). Knowing more than one language is and will continue to be a valuable skill to compete in the international economy where there is a demand for professionals and managers who can operate within more than one cultural code (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Despite the advantages associated with bilingualism, not all immigrants will be able to become *fluent* bilinguals. Scholars point out that highly skilled professionals, as compared to manual-level laborers, have some advantages in this regard. Due to their higher education and a requirement to have fluent and even unaccented English for most high-status occupations, many immigrant professionals become fluent, though not necessarily “accentless” bilinguals (Portez & Rumbaut, 1996). Fluent bilingualism is most often found among highly educated professionals (engineers, scientists, and physicians) and upper-class refugees, who are more likely than lower-class immigrants to pass on their skills to their children and raise a bilingual second generation. Based on the results from several studies, it appears that immigrants of higher socioeconomic background are in a better position to cope successfully with the need to balance two languages. It becomes possible through an “additive” approach – one that allows them to keep their native language and culture and, at the same time, learn a new one (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Based on the study conducted by Rumbaut and Ima (1998), fluent bilingual students tended to have intact families with high levels of education and income, and U.S. residence. Specifically, parents’ characteristics such as education, occupation, and knowledge of English were predictive of children’s bilingualism.

However, immigrant professionals may not always be successful at transmitting their native language to their children. Because they rarely reside in ethnic enclaves and are often dispersed throughout the country, they do not have the language maintenance supports (such as large and economically potent ethnic communities) which are extremely important for language preservation. In that case, geographic mobility or, on the opposite side, immobility when immigrants are clustered in ethnic communities, may determine whether the second generation will be bilingual (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996).

Rapid language assimilation among second-generation children may bring on a breakdown in fluent communication between parents and children (Doucet & Hamon, 2007; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). When forced to forget native language and learn English as fast as possible (the “subtractive” assimilation approach), children of immigrants get a message that their parents’ culture is inferior, and they may suffer from dissonant acculturation. Typically, with time in the U.S., children’s English abilities exceed those of their parents. The children also more and more frequently respond to their parents in English, which may undermine parental control and weaken parental authority (Buriel & DeMent, 1997, Kendis, 1989). Such negative effects of native language loss to students and their families motivate some scholars to advocate for more and better efforts in providing bilingual education in the United States (Hakuta, 1986; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

How important is native language to the highly educated immigrants in the present study, and what are their expectations for their children in this regard? During the interviews, one of the questions directly addressed this subject. The responses of the participants will be presented in chapter four.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a feeling shared by individuals in a given group, based on a sense of common origin, beliefs, values, goals, and shared destiny (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Understanding and constructing one's ethnic identity is partially finding an answer to the question, "Where do I come from?" A person's homeland, mother tongue, blood ties, and family all are related to this most fundamental concept of one's self-definition (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). How do immigrants reconcile their two lives: their past in the old country of origin and their future in a new homeland? What are some of the specific ways immigrants and their children make sense of their situation and how does it impact them?

This immigrant dilemma has been approached by scholars using three perspectives. First, a deficit-oriented view of immigrants describes them as living "between two worlds" and being alien to both of the worlds. Regardless of the efforts an immigrant makes, he will likely have an accent and look at things in his host country through a dual frame of reference. At the same time, he will not belong in his old country because of his new experience of immigration. A second perspective, dictated by the acculturation theory (Gordon, 1964), posits that immigrants resolve the dilemma by assimilating into the host culture. The third perspective is that of immigrant families able to live "in two worlds" and being able to modify their practices and behaviors depending on the context they are in. This perspective reflects an increased globalization of the world and advances in technology and information flow that allow people to find ways to balance continuity and change (Falicov, 2003). Such terms as "biculturalism," "bilingualism," "cultural bifocality," and "segmented assimilation" signify this nonlinear

model of adaptation among immigrants. Indeed, a successful immigrant adaptation depends on the individual's and his family's abilities to learn to live simultaneously in two social worlds (Rumbaut, 1994; Portez & Rumbaut, 1996).

Because of linguistic and cultural barriers, the first generation of immigrants does not assimilate fully into the new society; they struggle with ambivalence and never really “catch on to how different the rules are” in their new country (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p.89). As Falicov (2003) insightfully notes, many immigrants live dual lives. They follow American ways in a larger community but hold on to their ethnic ways in their closed circles. They acculturate to a degree that allows them to behave according to American values of independence, assertiveness, and achievement. However, they do not relinquish their native ways of family interactions, and in their homes they continue practicing collectivistic values of family cohesion, interdependence, and interpersonal relationships (Falicov, 2003; Wakil et al., 1981).

Despite the diversity among the immigrants, the majority of them come from collectivistic cultures that value three-generational and extended family ties. Not having all their family members with them in a new country, immigrants may experience “ambiguous loss” and often construct psychologically present family (Boss, 1999). They continue to maintain close family connectedness through phone calls and other ways of communication. Life-cycle changes involving births, illnesses, and deaths are particularly painful for immigrants. They are forced to cope or grieve without their family members, and they often have feelings of profound sadness, despair, and guilt for not being there, and not visiting more often (Falicov, 2003). Overall, first-generation immigrants have strong ties to their homelands and everything that their homeland represents. Their

background continues to influence the foods they cook, the traditions and rituals they follow, and the language they try to pass on to their children. They struggle to resolve the losses of immigration, and eventually learn to live in an ambiguous situation by applying “both/and” perspectives.

The second-generation immigrants are faced with a different set of problems linked to their ethnic identity. The children of immigrants do not experience migration loss as poignantly as their parents do, and they more quickly and easily learn the rules of the game of the new culture. The challenge for the second generation immigrants, however, is to deal with issues related to youth identity development (Erikson & Erikson, 1998), which is a much more complex process in immigrant families (Rumbaut, 1994; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). All children of immigrants inevitably have to make sense of who they are and find a “meaningful place in the society of which they are the newest members” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 190).

One of the stages of the above-mentioned assimilation theory (Gordon, 1964), *identification assimilation*, means that a person will self-identify as an unhyphenated American provided there is no prejudice and discrimination towards them in society. The change in ethnic self-identity is a turning point for second-generation immigrants. For white ethnic groups, assimilation is almost complete by the third generation. However, it is the second-generation children who go through the complex process of defining themselves as they are situated within two cultural worlds, and related to at least two groups, countries, and languages (Rumbaut, 1994; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

In a longitudinal study of immigrant youths from 77 different countries residing in Florida and California, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) asked an open-ended question about

students' ethnic self-identity. The researchers classified responses into four categories. The first two categories indicated the presence of an immigrant experience: (1) foreign national origin (e.g., Cambodian, Jamaican); (2) a hyphenated American identity (e.g., Cuban-American, Vietnamese-American). The last two categories showed a "made-in-the-U.S.A." identity: (3) a plain American national identity, without a hyphen; (4) a panethnic minority-group identity (e.g., Hispanic, Latino, Black, Asian). Three years later, researchers repeated the survey. The results showed that the least stable ethnic self-identifies were among the second-generation youths who did not experience discrimination, had become acculturated, spoke English at home, and grew distant from their immigrant parents' language and culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Over time, the Europeans and Canadians increasingly identified as plain Americans, while for the rest of the second-generation youth the process of figuring out ethnic identity was a bit more complicated. Having U.S. citizenship, or having one parent U.S.-born, was also found to increase the probability of self-identifying as American.

As mentioned earlier, white European immigrants and their children have an important advantage in the process of adjusting to their new environment. Because they are "racially and phenotypically indistinguishable" from the majority of the U.S. population, they generally do not have to be concerned with racial discrimination, or fear exclusion (Tuan, 1995). By the second generation, white European immigrants acquire unaccented English and cease to be perceived as "foreigners" by the larger society. In the words of Russian high school student who expects to easily "blend in" with college students because she is racially white, "I'm not really immigrant. I'm just American people" (Tuan, 1995, p. 124).

Educational research indicates that ethnicity and the meaning attached to ethnic labels also profoundly affect immigrant students' academic performance. Matute-Bianchi (1986), in her ethnographic study of a California school community, found that Japanese-Americans accommodated themselves, linguistically and culturally, to the white middle-class culture. Because of the favorable reputation associated with Japanese-Americans (being Asian is equated with being a good student), positive perception of a group identity aided students in their education. For Mexican-American students, however, "the negotiation of ethnicity" posed more problems. Some academically successful minority students were criticized by their peers for "trying to be white or gringo" (Matute-Bianchi, 1986, p. 254). The dilemma for some Mexican-American students is whether to be academically successful and rejected by their peers or to be identified as Chicano and be accepted by their peers. In another study of ethnicity and academic outcomes, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) found Chinese background to be beneficial for children's achievement while Mexican background was harmful. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) also provide a detailed account of the challenges faced by non-white children of immigrants who, if successful in school, are often ridiculed and accused of "acting white." The identity formation among these youth becomes more problematic.

Limited cultural assimilation, or "accommodation without assimilation" (Gibson, 1988), in which immigrants adapt to their new circumstances while maintaining their cultural identities, was found to be beneficial for the immigrant students' academic success. Similarly, a study of Southeast Asian refugees by Rumbaut and Ima (1988), demonstrates that the stronger the sense of ethnic resilience in youth, the higher the

students' GPA. The issues of ethnic identity and academic achievements will be discussed at length in the following section on education.

Self-translation, or finding one's ethnic identity, is a complex process that all immigrant children and children of immigrants go through, to the point that these children often become living paradoxes. For their immigrant parents, or grandparents who stayed in the old country, they are American through and through, despite the attempts to instill native ethnicity. While the children of immigrants identify with Americans, often "Americans do not identify" with them because of such visible markers as phenotype, language and nationality, leaving them wondering about who they are and where they fit (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 191). However, as Nahirny and Fishman (1996) state, the situation changes drastically by the third generation immigrants: then, ethnic heritage and language cease to play any important role. The process of figuring out one's identity is a complex one, but generally it is easier for youth whose appearance is not different from the majority youth of the host society. In this case, as previous research demonstrates, assimilation into the social context is achieved faster (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

In this age of globalization, migrations, and multiculturalism, how do professional immigrants and their children make sense of their ethnic identities? One of the interview questions directly addressed this subject. The answers of the participants will be presented in chapter four.

Education

With the increased volume and diversity of immigration to the U.S., researchers began to explore the effects of assimilation on educational achievements. There is a

growing body of research suggesting that as immigrant families assimilate into U.S. culture, some negative changes occur in the academic performance of immigrant youth and children of immigrants. With longer residence in the U.S. and in successive generations, English language skills improve but scholastic performance, work habits, and aspirations among children decline (Caplan et al., 1991; Jensen & Chitose, 1997; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Kao, 1995; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Rumbaut, 1995, 1997; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Waters, 1997). Recent immigrants are also less likely than their native-born counterparts to drop out of school (White & Glick, 2000). As Jensen and Chitose (1997) note, later generations unfortunately “come to emulate some of the less positive characteristics of preceding immigrant generations” (p. 61). In this section, I review the studies that found such erosion of human capital, as well as studies that began to look into the processes behind this anomaly.

Kao and Tienda (1995), using the data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, studied the impact of generational status on three indicators of educational achievements: grades, achievements test scores, and college aspirations of eighth graders. The data included large numbers of foreign-born youth and native-born youth of foreign-born parents. In addition, information was obtained from students’ parents, teachers, and schools. The results indicate that both first- and second-generation students consistently outperformed their third-generation and higher counterparts. However, as Rumbaut (1997) found in his study of over 5,000 eighth and ninth graders who were immigrants or children of immigrants, “over time and generation in the United States, reading achievement test scores go up, as does the amount of time spent watching television, but the number of hours spent on homework goes down, as does GPA” (p. 33). This finding

is in accord with other similar findings that link additional time spent in the U.S. with decline in scholastic performance (Caplan, et al., 1991; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Kao, 1995; Suarez-Orozco, 1989). In an attempt to understand differences in scholastic performance among native-born students and generations of immigrants, researchers looked at the influence of culture and parental behaviors.

Kao and Tienda (1995) explain that finding by discussing the difference in behavior between immigrant and native parents. The native-born children of immigrant parents (second generation) are in the best position to excel academically because of two factors: (1) their parents' higher aspirations, and (2) the children's command of the English language. The immigration status of parents plays a crucial role in shaping the educational aspirations of immigrant youth. Foreign-born parents have significantly higher educational aspirations for their children compared with native-born parents. They also possess "cultural resources" and demonstrate "immigrant optimism" about their children's future (Kao, 1995; Kao & Tienda, 1995). Parental immigration status was found to influence several factors of home life. Immigrant parents spent less time talking to their children about their school experiences, and were more reluctant to participate in school activities that were not directly related to their children's academic performance. However, compared to native-born parents, immigrant parents were more likely to attend parent-teacher conferences. Other studies attributed such practices as spending enough time with children, being watchful and involved in daily lives of children to positive academic outcomes (Cheng Gorman, 1998; Kovalcik, 1996).

Several studies examined the relationship between immigrant status and academic achievements and found support for the accommodation-without-assimilation hypothesis.

Gibson (1988/1990), in her two-year study of Punjabi Sikh immigrants in California's high schools, demonstrated that Punjabi immigrant students often outperformed both majority and long-established minority students. Punjabi immigrant students were successful despite the many challenges they faced: "significant cultural conflict between home and school life, little direct parental involvement, prejudice, language proficiency problems, and depressed socioeconomic status" (p. 218). Gibson claims that these students succeeded precisely because they accommodated without assimilating. In other words, they maintained their cultural identity while learning English, following American customs at school, and overall adopting "the good ways of the Americans", thus accommodating the dominant group. For these Punjabi students acculturation was additive, not subtractive. In the same way, Southeast Asian refugee families, often referred to as the Boat People, prevailed despite harsh life circumstances and their children demonstrated high academic achievements. They brought their cultural patterns to the United States and used them "to define their new world in their own terms. They then proceeded to act on this reality, seeing opportunity and access to such opportunity" (Caplan et al., 1991, p. 172).

Education is viewed as a means to upward mobility by many families who migrate to improve their economic situation. But what are the factors that promote educational achievements? One answer can be found in the study of Southeast Asian refugee youth done by Caplan and colleagues (1991). These refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos endured great hardships as they fled their countries, spent months and years in unsanitary refugee camps, and survived in the U.S. with no material possessions, little education, and little or no English skills. Nevertheless, a few years

later, they and their children achieved extraordinary successes through “hard work and determination” (Caplan et al., 1991).

To understand these refugees’ achievements, researchers analyzed a variety of quantitative and qualitative data as described in *Children of the Boat People* (1991). At the end, they state with “great confidence” that two factors explain this amazing story of success: cultural values and family practices. The following values and traditions are characteristic of these families: “hard work, education, achievement, self-reliance, steadfast purpose, and pride” (Caplan et al., p. 139). These values are very close to traditional, middle-class American values. However, as the researchers point out, the only difference between the Indochinese and American values is that, while American values emphasize independence and individualism, the Indochinese emphasize “functional interconnectiveness” among individuals and “strong, family-based orientation to achievement” (p. 139). Their families are characterized by high level of cohesiveness; all family members share household chores and obligations. A high level of educational achievement is constantly emphasized and is expected. School work is the main responsibility of the children, who devote three hours to homework each evening. Children work together, with older siblings tutoring the younger; as a result, older children benefit from reviewing school materials. Television watching in the homes of the Boat People is strictly limited. Caplan and colleagues (1991) describe parents who are actively involved in the lives of their children through reading, telling stories, and providing constant encouragement and support.

Another approach to understanding differences in scholastic performance for various ethnicities has been to look at perceived discrimination and the meaning attached

to ethnic labels. Interestingly, perceived discrimination produces different results (failure or success) for different ethnic groups. For instance, previously described Punjabi students equate schooling with economic success and honor, while many nonimmigrant minority groups equate schooling with Anglo conformity, assimilation, and a loss of ethnic identity. Such different approaches help understand why some groups emphasize opportunities, while other groups focus on the persistence of discrimination. An example of the former approach is found among Asian students (Sue & Okazaki, 1990) who view education as a way to overcome perceived restrictions in upward mobility; an example of the latter approach is found among Chicano students who, in their words, “must choose between doing well in school or being a Chicano” (Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

Researchers have proposed that individuals develop folk theories of success: “If I get a good education, I will succeed in getting a good job and maintaining a high standard of living” or “Even if I get a good education, people will discriminate against me” (Sue & Okazaki, 1990, p. 919). Many factors influence which folk theory will be developed by a group: cultural values, discrimination, past successes, beliefs in self-efficacy, and availability of successful role models, to name a few. As mentioned earlier, Punjabi Sikh immigrants (Gibson, 1988/1990) believe that success in life has to do with the things studied in school. Thus, their folk theory may be, “If I study hard, I can succeed, and education is the best way to succeed.” Such folk theory was found among Asian Americans (Li, 2001; Ritter & Dornbusch, 1998 as cited in Sue & Okazaki, 1990), who have experienced and perceive limitations in their career choices or social discrimination and thus find education to be a practical means of mobility.

Sue and Okazaki (1990), in their study of Asians and Whites, attempt to identify the kinds of parental behaviors that would explain differences in their children's academic achievements. They argue that culture by itself does not explain Asian scholastic achievements (not all Chinese students in China have great academic success), but it is, rather, cultural values interacting with conditions in any particular society that seem to play a role. In anticipating discrimination, Asian American parents make efforts to ensure their children obtain an education, particularly in areas that would not require excellent command of English, but instead emphasize technical competence, such as mathematics and sciences. They also push their children into "safe" professions, such as a physician, an engineer, a physical science researcher, or an accountant. Asian parents tend to not only have high expectation for their children, but they are likely to insist on unquestioned obedience and have low levels of communication with children. Contrary to expectations, such parental behavior results in the highest GPA for Asian children compared to white students (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Similar patterns of adjustment resulting from adopting minority ideology and subsequent pressure on children to pursue science-related careers were found by Li (2001) among immigrant Chinese families in Canada. These immigrant parents' perception of a new sociocultural environment was such that they believed science-related professions would ensure their children's success despite disadvantages that minorities face.

The meaning attached to ethnic labels also appears to influence students' scholastic achievements (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Matute-Bianchi, 1986). The study by Matute-Bianchi (1986) reviewed above shows that belonging to some ethnicities promotes academic success (e.g., Japanese) while it does not for others (e.g., Mexican).

Matute-Bianchi categorized Mexican-descent students in her study into five groups: recent-Mexican immigrant students, Mexican-oriented, Mexican-American, the Chicano, and the Cholo students. There were some important behavior differences among these students, one of which was that recent immigrant students were much more goal-oriented in their education, and had a stronger achievement levels and graduation rates than American-born Mexican students. One reason for their success in school, as most of the successful students of Mexican descent said, was the interest and support of their parents. These recent immigrants took academic coursework seriously, completed homework, and followed school discipline policy. Interestingly, such behaviors that promote academic success diminish as one move along the continuum for the above-mentioned groups of students. The last two groups, Chicano and Cholo students, are the least successful academically. Overall, it seems that children of more recent immigrants are influenced by their parents' educational views and motivation more than native-born students (Duran & Weffer, 1992).

Yet another explanation for the academic success of recent immigrants is positive self-selection and predisposition to adapt to the host country (Borjas, 1990; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ogbu, 1991). Despite the fact that at the beginning they may find themselves at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder and/or experience the loss of status (this is particularly true for more educated immigrants), they are nevertheless optimistic about the future of their children and expect upward mobility for them. Immigrants tend to overcome difficulties because they have an entirely different view of the world – a cross-cultural perspective. Gibson (1988/1990) explains with the example of the Punjabi Sikh immigrants that they succeed in part because the cultural frame of reference is their

home country, where they faced harsher environments than in the United States. Also, this and other immigrant groups often view their social and economic problems encountered in the host country as temporary, and, therefore, they are able to come up with creative, pragmatic solutions to them. Until these individuals adapt to the American standards of living, they are willing to work extra hard and take at low paying jobs and endure prejudice and discrimination by the dominant group. Researchers juxtapose this optimistic outlook with that of the many minorities who have lived in the United States for many generations. It is suggested that U.S.-born minorities have an entirely different perspective because of their real experiences with discrimination and their resulting disillusionment with upward mobility (Ogbu, 1991). Children tend to pick up on their parents' attitudes. It helps explain, in part, why children of immigrants academically outperform their native-born counterparts (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Caplan et al., 1991).

Using the data from a longitudinal, nationally representative survey, White and Glick (2000) looked into the process through which immigrants and their U.S. peers progress in school and found that recent immigrants are less likely to drop out of high school. Compared with U.S.-born students with such disadvantages as having low socioeconomic status and disrupted family structure, recent immigrants are more likely to continue their studies. Researchers attribute this immigrant perseverance to "familial social capital," or more specifically, parental involvement, home language, and attitudes. Thus, close parental supervision, bilingual background, and achievement-oriented attitudes all appear to contribute to greater human and social capital in immigrant youth.

Using the data from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Jensen and Chitose (1994) outlined a statistical portrait of the second generation children of

immigrants. Through a comparison of native-born children of native-born parents with children of at least one foreign-born parent, researchers reached the following conclusions that show “signs of both stress and hope.” When compared to native children, children of the new immigrants are more likely to live near the official poverty line, have heads of households with the lowest education, poor English skills, and who are unemployed or employed in low-status occupations and with low earnings. However, at the same time, there are some considerable positive elements found in the families of second generation children. Compared to native children, children of the new second generation are more likely to have married parents, and they are less likely to receive welfare income. Also, parents of the second-generation children are overrepresented among the best educated; they are more likely to have graduate or professional degrees, be employed and have asset income. The reason why children of immigrants are more likely to have poorly educated parents than are native children, and at the same time to have very well-educated parents, is that the “immigrant population is overrepresented among the worst and best endowed” (Jensen & Chitose, 1994; Rumbaut, 1996).

Researchers also found differences among the cohorts of immigrants depending on the years of their arrival to the U.S.: 1965-1974, 1975-1984, 1985-1990. From the analysis of the educational level of the heads of the households, it follows that the most recent cohort of immigrants, 1985-1990, is more educated than the preceding cohort, 1975-1984. Such pattern shows that the “quality” of the immigrants is not deteriorating but improving, a positive answer to the big concern of U.S. citizens regarding the new arrivals and their children. An increase of educated immigrants is, partially, a result of the

immigration policy that continues to give priority to prospective immigrants who have important job skills, and/or exceptional scientific or professional credentials.

As seen from the studies reviewed above, the length of residence in the United States influences students' educational achievements and aspirations negatively. The question arises then, what is it about living in the U.S. that impacts students' desire to do well in school and succeed? Or, as Waters (1997) frames the inquiry, "What are the particular social factors that dissipate the social capital of the immigrants over time?"

Based on her study of families from the Caribbean residing in New York, where she interviewed three populations: low-skilled immigrant workers, second-generation adolescents, and middle-class immigrant teachers in one New York City public school, Waters (1997) offers some possibilities on why immigrants' academic aspirations are lower. First, serial migration and lifestyle changes experienced in the U.S. weaken the ties between immigrant parents and their children. Particularly, nuclear immigrant families, once in the U.S., are becoming much more isolated than they were in their original country. Second, parents are less available to supervise their children because they spend long hours at work. Third, parental authority is eroded by differences between American norms regarding discipline and traditional disciplinary practices that often include physical punishment. Fourth, residential concentration is in the inner city with poor quality neighborhood schools. Fifth, teenagers whose families have emigrated to the U.S. from the Caribbean face racial discrimination.

While Waters' study provides insights into why there is a negative association of length of residence in the U.S. with both GPA and aspirations among immigrants from the Caribbean, it is important to explore this question with other populations. For

example, what factors play a role among more educated populations of immigrants (e.g., immigrant professionals) who possess more resources and thus are able to place their children in better schools, and /or after-school programs? It is essential to investigate whether the process of erosion of social capital, particularly as it pertains to immigrant children's academic achievement and aspirations, has similar characteristics for families from different ethnic groups who, for example, due to their skin color, may not have the additional challenge of dealing with discrimination.

To summarize, the present study focuses on an understudied immigrant group – highly educated professionals from Eastern Europe, and their parenting experiences in the United States. Topics of adaptation to the host country, changes in the family as a result of immigration, and parenting adjustments made in a new context, have been explored using in-depth personal interviews. Questions related to such central aspects of acculturation as ethnic identity, language, and education, informed by the review of the immigrant literature, were addressed specifically. The methodology of investigation of these issues is described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the acculturation experience of first-generation raising children in the United States. In this chapter, data collection procedures and the participants of the study are described. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the issues of rigor in qualitative methodology and an explanation of the data analysis used in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Increasingly, scholars advocate employing postpositivistic thinking, forgoing measures created based on the “typical” American family, and making use of qualitative research methods to study culturally diverse families in the context of their social environment (Patton, 2002; Sherif Trask & Marotz-Baden, 2007). For this study I chose a qualitative methodology to investigate immigrant families’ experiences and the meanings they make of them. A qualitative methodology allows one to paint a vivid picture of the family, by presenting rich quotes and deep illustrations of the feelings, conflicts, emotions, and motivations of its members (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995). Asking research participants open-ended questions gives them a voice to describe their lived experience of immigration and parenting (Sussman & Gilgun, 1997). Because no one member of any family is a sufficient source of information about that family, we can better understand family life from the multiple perspectives of its members (Handel, 1997). In an attempt to obtain perspectives from the two sources and thus overcome limitation of the most of family research, both mothers and fathers were interviewed.

I conducted personal interviews with 24 Eastern-European immigrant parents who comprise 12 married couples. Following IRB approval obtained in March of 2005, the

data were collected in the summer and fall of 2005. Participants were immigrant parents identified as “professionals” who (in all but two cases) were currently residing in the state of Louisiana. The criteria for participation were: (1) married couples with children; (2) first generation immigrants from Eastern Europe countries; (3) professional occupation for at least one of the spouses; and (4) a minimum length of residency in the United States of four years to ensure familiarity with the culture. A purposive sample was chosen because of the gap in the literature that left experiences of highly-educated immigrants from Eastern European countries unexamined.

Unlike in a quantitative research, which requires a probability sample to measure, generalize, and predict outcomes, in qualitative research an in-depth *understanding* of a phenomenon and its *meaning* are desired, and can be achieved through the use of purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Walker, 1997). The findings of the study may not necessarily be transferred or generalized to other immigrant families from Eastern European countries living in the United States. However, as mentioned earlier, professional immigrants are often geographically dispersed and are less likely to reside in ethnic communities because they tend to live where they find employment (Rumbaut, 1997). The participants of this study have a diversity of experience of living in other states in the U.S. where they have held jobs or obtained degrees from universities. Despite the differences among states or regions of the U.S., many issues related to family life and parenting in this culture are similar. Other commonly questioned issues of rigor of qualitative research are discussed at the end of this chapter.

The recruitment of the participants for the study was done through several means: personal contacts and a snowball network when the participants were asked to provide

additional potential interviewees (no more than one referred couple). In addition, the International Hospitality Foundation and International Cultural Center of Louisiana State University were contacted for referrals. Unfortunately for the study, Louisiana is not one of the states inhabited by many families from Eastern Europe. The difficulty of finding participants made me contact a major local newspaper, *The Advocate*. After a brief announcement (see appendix A) run in the daily column on the first page of the newspaper did not yield any participants, a newspaper published a feature article about the study. Immediately following the publication, I received eight phone calls from immigrant parents, one child of immigrants who volunteered his parents for the study, and from several American parents interested in parenting issues. Three immigrant couples fit the criteria for the study and were subsequently interviewed.

The personal interviews were conducted either in the participants' homes or, in three instances, at their workplace. Both spouses were interviewed together in all but one instance (due to spouses' busy working schedules). In all interviews both spouses answered each question, alternating the order of the first response. Four families had to be interviewed over the phone as they had moved from Louisiana to other states for employment opportunities. On average, the interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Prior to the interview, each participant signed an informed consent form (see appendix B) that explained the purpose and procedures of the study, as well as their rights and assurance of anonymity. Participants also filled out one page demographic information sheet (see appendix C), that included their age, educational level, occupation, country of origin, number of years in the U.S., income, age and gender of children, and the states that they

had lived in while in the United States. After the forms had been completed, a semi-structured interview with 20 open-ended questions was conducted.

All interviews were conducted in English. Although in 5 out of 11 instances participants and I shared the same language, with my invitation they preferred to speak English. In one of these families the wife would go back to speaking Russian throughout the interview; during transcription, I translated her responses into English with the consideration of cultural context.

The interview questions for the study were developed based on the review of the literature on immigrant parenting, input from two immigrant parents who were doctoral students at the time (2004), and suggestions from the members of the dissertation committee during the pre-proposal meeting held in April of 2005. All the comments and suggestions strengthened the interview instrument by helping to avoid leading, repetitive, or irrelevant questions, and also helped to reduce the number of questions. Two pilot interviews conducted in the spring of 2005 helped to finalize the interview instrument and to refine probes designed to obtain participants' responses about their experiences. Interview questions can be found in appendix D; they covered the following areas: changes in the family as a result of immigration; benefits and challenges of raising children in their home countries and in the U.S.; participants' perceptions of the differences between Eastern European and American parenting; adjustments they had to make in a new context; and the issues of education, language, culture, and generational conflict.

Participants

Overall, 24 married immigrant parents (12 married couples) were interviewed. The following Eastern European countries were represented by the participants: Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. On average, these families had resided in the U.S. for 10 years (the range was from 5 to 15 years) and did not migrate serially (in all but two instances, the spouses came to the U.S. at the same time).

The median age was 38 years for fathers, and 37 years for mothers. The vast majority of the participants held advanced graduate degrees: 15 – MS/MA/MSW/MBA, 15 - PhD, and one - MD. All post-graduate degrees were obtained at U.S. universities. Despite efforts to ensure a sample that would not be overrepresented with the university employees, half of the participants turned out to be professors, instructors, or postdoctoral researchers at the universities. The rest of the participants were employed in industry (4), business (4), medical field (2), or non-profit organizations (2).

All couples except one were dual-career families: both spouses were employed outside the home, whether in university, industry, or business. Reported combined family income was over \$100,000 for eight couples, around \$60,000 for three couples, and around \$40,000 for one couple (due to temporary work circumstances). Participants had the experience of living in several states in the U.S.: Louisiana, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Colorado, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, New Jersey, Kansas, Arkansas, Utah, and Pennsylvania, with the majority currently residing in Louisiana.

Seven families had two children, and five families had one child. In total, these 12 married couples had 19 children (7 girls and 12 boys), 10 of whom were born in the

United States. The average age of the children was 9 years old (the range was from 1 to 21 years). Children were not interviewed.

Rigor of the Qualitative Methodology

The issue of adequate rigor in conducting qualitative research can be addressed through ensuring credibility, dependability, conformability, and reflexivity. Each of these topics is reviewed below, based on the discussion in Marks and Dollahite (2001).

- 1) Credibility - means that a researcher understands and truthfully communicates the meaning of what participants are telling her. As Gilgun (1992) put it, “Am I communicating what my informants are telling me?” In this study, credibility was strived for by persistent observation (Dienhart, 1998) during the interview and subsequent peer debriefing (Denzin, 1994) process, which is described in the data analysis section of this chapter.
- 2) Dependability - refers to the accuracy of the instrument over time. For the current study, an 18-question instrument was developed based on the existing literature, with input from two immigrant parents, the dissertation committee, and two pilot interviews. Although additional clarifying questions were asked in the process of the interviews, the interview questionnaire provided consistent structure to all interviews.
- 3) Confirmability - is concerned with the issue of the researcher’s objectivity. However, all knowledge is socially constructed and depends on time, and the participants’ perspective (Walker, 1997). There is no such thing as a totally objective social researcher (Slife & Williams, 1995). The discussion of reflexivity is more appropriate in this regard and is offered below. In any case, “all data

should be traceable and confirmable to the original source” (Marks & Dollahite, 2001, p. 633). The data, upon which the present work is based, are available in the form of voice files and transcripts.

- 4) Reflexivity - in qualitative research contrasts in some ways with objectivity in quantitative research. It is critical in the qualitative research as it influences researchers’ biases in data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and in reporting results (Patton, 2002; Sussman & Gilgun, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). It is especially important to identify when the researcher is an insider or a member of the group under study, which is the case in this situation. I was born and raised in Ukraine, and am married to an immigrant from Romania. We both have received graduate degrees from a U.S. university, and are parents in a new, for us, sociocultural context. My formative years were spent in a different culture; thus, my upbringing, personal history, experiences, beliefs and values can influence the research. My personal experience adds to the study both sensitivity to and awareness of the issues related to immigrant parenting by Eastern Europeans. I believe that being interviewed by an insider allowed participants in my study to feel more comfortable when discussing their experiences. As a member of the group I am studying, there are differences as well as similarities between my experience as an immigrant parent from Eastern Europe, and those of the study participants. However, a goal is to present a thorough and accurate view of the research topic.

Having briefly addressed the main issues regarding the rigor of qualitative research, this chapter will be concluded with a description of the data analysis used in the study.

Data Analysis

Consistent with grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), data collection and analysis for this study were performed simultaneously. With the consent of the participants, all interviews were audiotaped. I transcribed interviews verbatim within a few days of their completion; an average length of the interview transcript was 15 single-spaced pages. Immediately following transcription, I performed open coding. Open coding is a process of identifying and developing concepts in the interview data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I used a combination of line-by-line and sentence or paragraph coding.

After having conducted more interviews, I continued with axial coding that allows for making connections between categories. Numeric content analysis of the coding concepts was performed for each interview, resulting in a post-it note with an at-a-glance summary of the concepts that occurred frequently and saliently (Marks, Nesteruk, Swanson, Garrison, & Davis, 2005). Summary post-it-notes notes from the interviews served as a useful tool for across-interview coding. After close examination and scrutiny, the concepts were narrowed down to a manageable number. In the end, the most salient and frequently mentioned concepts and themes in the interview data were identified. I stopped collecting data when theoretical situation had been met, meaning that (1) little new or relevant data was emerging from latter interviews; (2) the properties within each category were well developed, and (3) the relationships between categories were validated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

To ensuring credibility of a qualitative analysis, or a fit between the respondents' intended meaning and my interpretation of their responses, I used a peer debriefing

process. A fellow graduate student, who is also working on her qualitative dissertation and has had experience in conducting qualitative research, participated in peer debriefing in return for the same favor from me. She read five randomly selected interview transcripts and independently coded them. We then discussed and contrasted our open coding on a line-by-line, page-by-page basis. We also compared numeric content analysis, exchanged interpretations of the data, and verified major themes.

Based on preliminary findings and emerging themes, the review of the literature was updated and expanded to address three salient themes of language, ethnic identity, and education. This process is consistent with the view of interpretive work as being non-linear; that is when a researcher moves back and forth from text to coding, to a new idea, to text again, to literature that alerts researcher to the “possibility of issues,” and so on (Walker, 1997).

In the final analysis of the data, seven themes were identified as the most salient for the participants’ experience of parenting children in a new sociocultural environment. The findings of the study are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the acculturation experiences of the first-generation Eastern European immigrant professionals, particularly as related to child rearing in a new sociocultural environment. A qualitative methodology was utilized to explore this topic because it allows participants to tell the story of their lived experience of parenting in immigration and to share the meanings they make of them.

This chapter contains the findings of the study, represented by seven major themes that emerged from the analysis of the data. It is important to mention that in the process of data analysis, roughly a dozen themes emerged. I have many pages of supporting data for each theme, but the scope of this work allows presenting only a significant portion of the data. The following seven themes were identified as the most representative themes related to parenting experiences of the participants. Importantly, the numbering of these themes does not reflect their saliency or relative importance (except for the first theme).

- 1) Education: “Education is a big goal, a means of establishing one’s life.”
- 2) Language: “He answers in English, and this breaks my heart.”
- 3) Ethnic identity and biculturalism: “I don’t think our kids are torn between two worlds... We are.”
- 4) Grandparents and extended family: “In our culture, the grandparents are very involved with grandchildren, their daily upbringing.”
- 5) Time bind: “You don’t have a lot of time for your kids here, and you need to live with that.”

6) Environmental influences: “We were not guided in our life that much by media and television; we got our [role] models from the family, books.”

7) Discipline, independence, self-esteem, and confidence: “As a parent, you have to know how to keep it in balance.”

On the following pages, each of these themes will be presented along with the supporting narratives from the participants.

Theme 1. Education:
“Education Is a Big Goal, a Means of Establishing One’s Life.”

Although only one interview question asked about education of children in the U.S., the subject of children’s education emerged as the most salient theme in the responses of the participants across the interviews. The theme of education will be presented through three sub-themes: (1) educational expectations of parents towards their children, (2) perceived quality of education in the U.S., and (3) sociocultural influences on the youth’s educational achievements in the host country.

Sub-theme 1. Educational Expectations: “Education Is a Must; the Sky Is the Limit.”

Based on the parents’ responses, the most important goal they have for their children is to get a good education. As these immigrant professionals continuously emphasize, education was important for them growing up in Eastern Europe, and it is still important for them now, raising their children in the United States. Education is viewed as important not only to establish a “career and be successful” professionally and financially. It is equally significant for these parents to have their children become “a good person” with a sense of purpose, “to find his place in life,” and to lead “an interesting life.”

*Boris*²: In the old [communist] system where we come from, good education was everything! It was a big goal. Our goal for kids is to get a good education.

Vladimir: We put all efforts for them to have a good life, and it's not possible without good education. Education is a great emphasis in our family, and with my son and with my daughter, both. We try to give them all opportunities to improve and to go further.

From the participants' comments it appears that they value education not so much as a means of achieving individualistic goals of monetary success and prosperity, as for its intrinsic value and moral enrichment. Below are representative quotes from the three parents.

Eva: The goal is to have [our son] educated and to make a good person of him. All we do it is to give him some direction, to make him a good person, not just like, "Go, make money."

Tatiana: [There are] other values of education, not only your salary but people you get to meet, people you will basically spend your life with. So, whether you get an education or you don't get an education [will determine the kids of people you will be around].

Oleg: Education is a means of establishing your life, not only financially or materialistically, but basically in a very broad context.

The majority of the participants in the study said they immigrated to the United States because it allowed them to continue their scientific research and provide for their families. Indeed, a "disintegrating socialistic economy" of these Eastern European countries failed to provide good jobs for most of its talented engineers and researchers, thus leaving their skills unutilized (Freedman, 2005). Because education has given these immigrant professionals mobility, an opportunity to make a "good living" while doing what they like, they want the same for their children. The expectations for children's educational achievements are quite high among these professionals.

² All names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Magda: Just like back in Romania, we would like [our children] to learn, to study, and to go to college. And do more than just college, get a Master's degree or PhD.

Having jobs in "hard sciences" like physics, chemistry, engineering, mathematics, biology, or medicine, paid off for these professionals in terms of salaries and job availability in the United States. They view these occupations as "safe" in terms of monetary rewards and job availability, and are prepared to steer their children towards them. Note a list of occupations one father from Romania mentioned as suitable for his two daughters.

Daniel: I will encourage them to become whatever they want, a medical doctor, or a physicist, or a mathematician.

Another couple from Ukraine, where both parents are working in the chemical industry, similarly "expect certain things," such as having their 4-year old son become an engineer. A similar push towards technical occupations can be found in the research with Asian immigrant parents, who chose this strategy in anticipation of future discrimination (Li, 2001; Sue & Okazaki, 1990).

When asked whether their goals for children would be different if they stayed in their home countries, participants unanimously answered no. They believe that their goal of ensuring children get an education is based on absolute values that do not change as a result of immigration. The only difference lies in the way these goals can be reached: "there are many more opportunities and options [in the U. S.]." Participants are incredibly optimistic about their children's future prospects. In their perception, the U.S. offers unlimited opportunities for their children's education, growth, and development. The following quotes illustrate this optimism of the first generation immigrants, also documented in other studies (Kao, 1995; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Eva: The sky is the limit. Definitely, this country is that good. What is on that road depends on you, how strong a person you will become. [In the U.S.], opportunities for our son are way better than in our own country. We came here to give him more choices than one. In [Bosnia], plenty of young people are intelligent, finishing colleges, universities, but they don't have jobs. We don't want that happen to him.

Ovidiu: The goals [for our children] would be the same. But there are more opportunities to achieve them here. Compared to Romania, they will have more opportunities, because of the way society is here. In Romania, there is more corruption, less economic development, fewer opportunities to do something. Here, they can live their life how it is supposed to be lived, without making compromises.

These parents are in a particularly advantageous position to help their children succeed academically. And they are aware that their family's educational and financial situation allows for things that many families may not be able to take advantage of.

Galina: I think there are many more opportunities here, probably not for everybody, everywhere, like if you don't have any money and you are in a bad place and you are stuck with a bad school. But for people like me, who have certain income and education, and certain choice, I think he has more choices. If I don't like the public school I can afford to send him to private school. I can afford to spend time with him because my job will allow me. I can afford to have a tutor so that [my son] can have everything.

To fairly represent the experiences of the participants, it is important to note that a few of them question whether they should compel their children to obtain advanced degrees. They observe that "somehow life in the U.S. doesn't require so much education" as to necessarily get a Master's or a Doctoral degree. Even with graduate degrees, one cannot be guaranteed a stable job, as evidenced by the narrative from Ivana.

Ivana: We are burned now. We spent so much time in school. My husband devoted all his life to Physical Chemistry. He spent 16 years at this very high educational, academic level, and he is trying to provide for his family. But now his contract is ending. I have two Master's degrees, and with my salary our family of four will be under the poverty line. Why will a person want to spend 16 years in school to get a PhD, postdoc, etc., when they can go and do some air-conditioning or maintenance work, and get to be very well paid?

Nicoleta and her husband similarly doubt whether they want to steer their child to get a PhD, and be pressed by a highly demanding, stressful job, like they are.

Nicoleta: [My husband and I] are both PhDs, so we want our daughter to go to school. But we know that having an advanced degree means a lot of responsibilities, and commitment to your job. And sometimes we wonder if this is the best for our kid, we don't know. Also, students must know that having a degree means something. I'm not sure we can tell them today, if you get a degree this is what you get. Of course, years of education pay, but up to a point. The more you stay in school, like for your PhD, the more you lose the money. And plus, when you were studying and making almost no money, you have already lost a lot of money.

Overall, however, children's education carries a huge significance to these parents, and getting at least a Bachelor degree is "a must." Education means so much to them that, when asked about whether they want their children to marry an American or somebody from their own culture, the unanimous answer was that nationality does not matter, "the important thing is that it would be a good person, and *educated* person." Focused on ensuring their children get the best education possible that would secure their life success, however, these parents face several new challenges in the host country, one of which is the quality of education. Factual or not, in their perception, the quality of school education in the U.S. is low, as described in the next sub-theme.

Sub-theme 2. Perceived Quality of K-12 Education: "It Is Not Challenging Enough, and Homework Is Not Required."

Despite boundless optimism about opportunities for their children for a successful life in the U.S, these immigrant professionals are not pleased with the quality of the educational system of their host country. All but one participant felt that, overall, U.S. school education is inferior to those of their native countries, and find it alarming that children are not being challenged enough at school and are not required to prepare

homework. At the same time, these immigrant professionals spoke with pride about the excellence of the educational system in their countries of origin.

Ivana: When we were in school in Bulgaria, and everywhere in Eastern Europe, the educational system was very, very strong. Bulgaria was producing very good mathematicians, physicians, in all the science fields, plus, very good artists and musicians.

To understand the participants' perspective on the educational system of the United States, it is worth noting that the system of education in Eastern European countries is known for its durability, rigorous academics, and even curriculum overload that, as some researchers note, may "leave many students exhausted" with little time for fun activities (Ispa & Elliott, 2003, p. 1389). Although there are differences among these Eastern European countries and their educational systems, a rigorous curriculum was a common feature, as one participant said "that might be specific for all the countries that were under communists." At the same time, the level of preparation in "middle and high schools" in the U.S. is perceived by the participants as "not as high." Such opinion was expressed by participants whose children attended both public and private schools. Below are several representative quotes from parents from Romania, Russia, and Bulgaria that illustrate educational systems in their respective countries, and show concerns about the underutilized potential of children in the U.S. schools. Daniel, a professor of engineering at a U.S. university and father of two daughters, tells his about his perspective on the American educational system.

Daniel: The kids are much smarter and have much more potential than [teachers in the U.S.] challenge them. From 5th grade to high school here [teachers] just ask them to repeat what they've done in the second grade, add numbers, few fractions, and so on – they don't challenge them at all, zero challenge. But kids have the ability to absorb a lot of information, and the communist system gave it. [In contrast, teachers in Romania] probably even put too much knowledge, they may have overdone it, but nevertheless the challenge was there. [...] I'm very afraid

that my daughters will spend between 5th grade and 12th grade [in American schools] when they are developing their minds and will be challenged so little! That's something that *scares* me.

Vladimir: I checked my son's textbooks, and the level is not very deep. Also, not a lot of work is required: *if* you want, you can do this. But it is not required to work hard as it was and, I hope, still is in Russia. So, that is why we perceive it as a disadvantage to have our children in schools here.

George, a professor of mathematics, gives examples that indicate that his son is not being challenged enough in schools and gets bored as a result. The boy, who is not a native-born American and for whom English is a second language, "even in the language assignments finishes before his colleagues," and was even one of the two students selected "to write an essay in English for a book contest... out of 30 students."

George: The problem we have with the school system is that we don't see it [as] challenging enough. We have a lot of days when our son comes back from school, and he is more rested than he was in the morning! [laughter]. He has so much energy as if he went and took a nap, and this year he told us that gets *bored* at school. He finishes every assignment the teacher gives him way before the other kids. We feel that he is not challenged enough. And when [my wife and I] compare what they are doing in school in his grade to what we were doing in that grade when we were that age - there is a big difference! We were doing a lot more!

It is worth noting, that in their comparisons these parents talk about the education in their countries of origin a generation earlier, when they were growing up. Since the collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe in 1989, both parents and educators in Eastern Europe lament the decline in educational standards, students' discipline, and recent shift to a more westernized attitude to education as a means to achieve financial success (Ispa & Elliott, 2003). Several participants also speculated that such devaluation of education may be a world-wide process: "our friends in Russia tell us that it is deteriorating"; "from what I'm learning now, the educational system is going down in

Bulgaria.” Nevertheless, they recognize that the overall quality of school education in their countries of origin still remains relatively high.

Galina: I think schools here are easier than schools in Romania and Bulgaria, so once [children] have some schooling there and when they come here, they are better prepared. But if they start here from the very beginning they don’t have this advantage. The level of school is better in Eastern Europe than [in the U.S.], especially for math.

Exactly what Galina described happened to a child from another family in the study. The boy arrived in the U.S. having completed several grades in Russian school, and, in his parents’ opinion, this background “got him through high school here.” His father, Boris, also provided examples of his friends’ children in a similar situation.

Boris: I have friends who have kids who were not great students in Russia, but because they finished 5-6 grades in Russia, they are like the best students in their high schools here in the U.S. We have plenty of kids like this in New York. Because of the differences in education.

Based on their own experiences or that of their friends, several parents acknowledged the differences in the quality of education among the regions of the United States (North versus South), as well as between public and private schools. However, the overall perception about the quality of schooling in the U. S. is that it is still inferior to education in Eastern European countries. Only one parent in the study commented that despite many “complaints from Russian parents” about the mediocrity of education in American schools and “not enough homework and science classes,” she was satisfied with her children’s education and happy with their acquisition of excellent English language skills. Yet, the rest of parents in the study find school education in the U.S. to be disappointing. However, participants separate the quality of primary and secondary schooling from college education. They believe that college and graduate education in the U.S. are “great,” and are of better quality than those in their countries of origin.

Nicoleta: We think schools [in the U.S.] are not so hard, you don't learn as much as you do back home, from first grade to high school included. [Strangely], although in [American] high schools kids are not challenged to learn as much... College is different; I like the higher education in the U.S. So, the benefits [of immigration for our daughter] start once she reaches college; she'll have the education I'm looking for, and I'm very supportive of a graduate degree in the U.S.

When discussing education, participants also spoke disapprovingly about what they view as “superficial” aspects of learning emphasized in American schools, specifically about an expectation that education has to be “fun” and easy. Parents view such attitude as inadmissible in their families. In their experience, learning requires great effort, and children should be taught a habit for labor. An often mentioned example in this regard was the issue of homework assignments in schools. In the participants' native countries, homework is an integral part of the learning process. Children spend several hours each day preparing homework for all subjects. Parents and older siblings are often there to help, explain the difficult material, and, if needed, to insist on having the homework done. The following comment from Olga illustrates the distress of these immigrant parents at the lack of homework assignments in American schools. In their native countries, all adults (parents, teachers, principals) work together to ensure children work hard and learn.

Olga: School [in the U.S.] is like this... Here is your homework, the next day you come to class, did you do your homework? No. Oh, well, that's your choice. You didn't do your homework, you didn't learn anything, bye! In Russia, if you come and you didn't do your homework, you get the lowest grade possible, you'll have to explain to a homeroom teacher, or whatever they call it here, and the principal, and [your classmates]. Every adult in school will talk to you, not to mention your parents at home, it's a big deal.

Oleg and Tatiana, both professors of chemistry from Russia and parents of two, similarly spoke about their intolerance towards allowing children too much freedom in deciding

matters they do not understand due to their young age. In addition, Oleg's comment about homework illustrates the importance of parental involvement, particularly in an American educational system that, in his view, allows children too much autonomy.

Oleg: I think that the American educational system is too free. For example, nobody wants to do homework, and the problem is that many parents won't really insist for kids to spend much time doing homework. This is not good because kids basically don't learn what they are supposed to learn. Thus, in the authoritarian way you make the child do the homework, how much it takes, whether it is two, or three, or four hours, *until* they are done. Until they understand all the subtle details. And this works, this worked for us. We may not know what our kids want, but we know how we can do the best in order for them to come to the point where they should be. Because they don't even know where they should be.

Over half of the participants expressed a desire to supplement their children's school education with studying at home, and to "challenge them more outside of the class." Despite such "big plans," however, several parents frankly admitted, "We are busy, we really live like everybody [else] in this country" (more on this is in the time – related theme). Other parents, like Simona and George, both university professors of mathematics, were actually implementing their plans. However, they notice a growing resistance from their son. In the following narrative, they describe how they try to create for their son a home environment conducive to learning, challenge him to go beyond the basics expected in American school and to strive for knowledge.

George: We even go to the set up, you have to stay at the desk, work on your homework, work for an hour, work for two hours. Five minutes is not enough, that's not homework, it's just play. We are giving him extra things to do, trying to show him that *you never know everything*.

Simona and George attribute their son's growing resistance towards studying and their authority to the influences coming from the broader sociocultural environment. Other parents in the study similarly report such trend, as will be described in the next sub-theme.

Sub-theme 3. Sociocultural Influences on Educational Achievements: “This Culture of Celebrity Obsession... The only Question Is, Can I Make a Lot of Money out of It?”

As the data show, education has a high value for these immigrant professionals. Focused on ensuring that their children get the best education possible to secure their life success, however, these parents face a new challenge in the host country – a societal attitude towards education that makes it “harder and harder to motivate” their children. Here I will discuss U.S. cultural messages that could possibly be undermining children’s motivation to study. Some of the data in this sub-theme echo the theme of “environmental influences,” discussed further. However, because of their direct applicability to the education and saliency to the participants, these data deserve separate attention. In addition, the following narratives provide possible explanations to the findings from quantitative studies that link longer residence in the U.S. with a decline in academic achievements and aspirations among the children of immigrants (Caplan et al., 1991; Jensen & Chitose, 1997; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Kao, 1995; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Rumbaut, 1995, 1997; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Waters, 1997).

Factual or not, in the participants’ perceptions, education is not valued as much in the U.S. as it was valued in their countries of origin. In Eastern European countries, education as a desired and important goal was supported and promoted on all levels: from family, to school, to society as a whole (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Pearson, 1990; Robila, 2004). However, in a new social environment, these parents are up against undermining influences coming from the mass media and a “culture of celebrity obsession.”

Valentina: I think most of children [in the U.S.] are getting confused with the media reports that say, you don’t have to be educated... This culture of celebrity obsession, [where] you don’t have to go to college to make money - just look at those Hollywood movies – that’s a wrong message sent by the media and by the society. In Russia, the tradition was to have an education. It is prestigious. There

was still a prestige of being educated in Russia, compared to the U.S., especially getting higher education.

Participants report that because of what their children see on television, many of them want to be basketball and football players, or pop stars, simply because those persons are paid well. It is troubling for these parents that their children grow up surrounded by the “wrong” role models that point to the possibility of a “decent lifestyle without being educated.” The following quotes illustrate parents’ frustrations with cultural messages their children are influenced by.

Tatiana: [Immediately upon arrival to the U.S.] children are more subjected to this immigrant mind-set of their parents that you need to establish yourself in this country, you need to work hard, you need to study, you need to get a good job. And then, after some time, they realize that maybe it is not necessary, you see Britney Spears. She is [wealthy] and she didn’t go to college.

George: Our son says, “I want to play American football, or be a football coach, NFL coach.” Why? “Because he makes 5 million dollars a year.” I say, think about something else. “I want to be a businessman.” Why? “Because Donald Trump is a billionaire.” And we are trying to tell him that money is not everything. You have to have your education. But when you look at TV, all you see is about money, these ideas that... you are famous only if you have a lot of money, everything translates into money. From houses, cars, girls, and whatever. [...] everything for him seems to translate into making money. He is not starting to look at a career because he likes to do it. The only question is, can I make a lot of money out of it?

While children want more comforts than their parents have, they want to get there through different ways, “which means less studying, less knowledge, and more of a ‘street smart’ sort of thing,” as one participant described. Unfortunately, despite their efforts, many parents interviewed for the study feel that they may fail because they are up against the “whole American society” that gives to their children different messages about learning.

Daniel: The biggest goal is to get a good education. But here [my children] live in a different environment. It’s not that these kids don’t want education, but they

look [at life] superficially... There is gonna be a little bit of conflict between what I want and what my children will want because they grow up in this environment.

George's narrative similarly captures the clash between the values and expectations of the two cultures, and depicts the beginning of the process of gradual loss of parental power and authority over his nine year old son.

George: It's a little bit of a clash between our culture, and our education, and expectations, and our style, and what we want to transmit to him. On the other side you have the whole American society, every single program on TV, and the school which he is in for 8 hours a day, and the kids he is playing with and the teacher at school, all on one side against the two of us. [My wife and I] do not give the same message [as U.S. culture], and we have to work against everybody else in trying to get our message through and make him [do the right thing]. And sometimes it's hard to make him understand why what we say is better.

The next narrative, shared by a mother of a 17-year-old boy, provides a glimpse into what George may experience as his nine-year-old grows older. This parent describes a conflict with her son, who, as she and her husband believe, got corrupted by the lenient attitude towards education in the United States and rebelled against their authority.

Lidiya: He is quite a loyal and obedient son. The only thing is that we wanted him to read more, to study more, but he adapted to this life [too fast]. He's got from here some American laziness, not striving for achievements... oh, it would be more accurate to say he adapted this feature not to make a lot of efforts regarding studying. He would watch more TV, and this was a major conflict. We wanted him to study more and be more goal-oriented like in Russia, and he would reply to us, "Why? Am I in Russia? Had you have left me in Russia, I'd study till 11 pm." You know children back home are working on their homework until late night. But here there is no homework! That was a conflict.

International migrants are a self-selected group, optimistic about the future and predisposed for upward mobility (Borjas, 1990; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ogbu, 1991). Many parents in this study stated that they came to the U.S. with big ambitions, hoping that their thinking "will rub-off" on their children and translate into academic and, eventually, life success. However, a new sociocultural environment influences their children's

motivation, as several parents describe: “the first generation is trying to have them study, but the second generation goes with the flow,” and predict that “probably she’s just go to the average,” or “he will become like an average American.”

Laura: Immigrant parents usually come with a lot of energy and ambitions, more than the average Americans have. They need them in order to overcome the difficulties of coming to the U.S. and the language and cultural barriers, and to integrate in the American society. This is in some ways a ‘natural selection.’ The second generation doesn’t have these ambitions, hard work, and energy to succeed; they are like all other Americans.

Children of immigrants grow up in the U.S. surrounded by many life comforts and, thus, take material things for granted. Such a situation often leads to decreased motivation for achievements, or as parents say, “the drive is not there anymore.”

Nicoleta: Our kids growing up here are very spoiled in a different way than we were spoiled. We were spoiled because we had our parents around, and neighbors, and other kids, a very much family-oriented environment. [Our kids] are spoiled in that they have their own room, and they have millions of toys and computers, and anything they want they get, financially, materially. They are learning to get things in an easy way, so they have nothing to fight for. Why would you go to a different country like we came to accomplish something, financially and professionally, or whatever dreams we had when we decided to come to this country? They don’t need to make that effort, because they are already born here, they have certain things which are from mom and dad and they don’t really have to work hard.

In summary, providing their children with a solid education is a major parenting goal for these immigrant professionals. Despite their enormous optimism about opportunities that the U.S. has to offer for their children’s overall development and growth, the quality of primary and secondary education is perceived by parents as low, and is one of the major stressors in their lives. In addition, sociocultural messages sent by U.S. society reportedly undermine parental efforts and ambitions. Although this study was not designed to analyze the quality of education in American schools, or to find “why” definitive answers to the phenomenon of dissipation of immigrants’ capital,

nonetheless the findings that emerged from the outsiders' views about the educational system in the U.S. and cultural messages may be of interest to parents, educators, and policy makers. We now turn to the second theme, language.

Theme 2. Language: “He Answers in English, and This Breaks My Heart”

Another key theme that emerged from the interview analysis was language. It is significant that parents spoke about the importance of their native language preservation among their children not only as an answer to a direct language question, but also throughout the interviews. For example, when asked about “the greatest challenges” they as parents face in the U.S., eight parents named maintaining their native language in children. Three representative responses from different participants follow.

Oleg: The main challenge is that of course we want [our children] to preserve their native language, Russian [...] and this is a big challenge because our older daughter spends most of her time at school, and so she speaks English and we see how her Russian diminishes and how it becomes more primitive and no longer develops. The loss of their culture, their native culture is the major challenge. I don't think there is anything else that would be that important. Language is a part of their culture which we want them to preserve.

Diana: This is very important, period! They have to speak [Romanian language].

Valentina: The biggest challenge of raising our kids here... it's hard for them to maintain their native language. In general you watch them and you realize at some point that English becomes their first language, and that's kind of disappointing, because we still prefer to talk and to think at home in Russian.

The vast majority of parents said that it was very important for them to pass on their language legacy. It was important to them for several reasons; the primary one is to ensure that their children have a connection to grandparents and their culture, history, literature, and traditions. Parents of small children, looking into the future, foresee that normative generational conflicts may potentially be exacerbated by additional conflicts brought about by cultural and language gaps. This is a valid concern, as evidenced by the

immigrant literature (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). For example, Tatiana and Oleg, parents of a ten-year old daughter and a one-year son, view language as a carrier of a value system and culture of their country of origin that they hope to transmit to their children:

Oleg: We may end up losing connections [...] with children because we will just be speaking different languages, not in a particular sense of language, but in a very general sense. This is of course a common problem of parents and children. Each new generation does not necessarily understand the previous generation. But we also don't understand many of the things that they are studying in school, in a cultural sense. We grew up in a different environment, so we know that for our kids to be able to communicate to us, we have to change. We are learning but this is not something that is easy to do. So, for them learning our value system, [our] way of thinking may be too challenging, so they may not be able to accomplish [these things].

Tatiana: I'm afraid that we will lose common cultural points with them, that they will not read the same books, they will not see the same movies, so this is something that worries me a lot. [I worry that they will] not be able to speak Russian and to understand Russian very well, they may lose connections with their relatives in Russia because none of them know English... all their cousins, grandmas, grandpas, aunts, uncles.

As noted in the previous quote, the ability to speak the native language is extremely important because it allows children to communicate with their grandparents and extended family. Traditionally, Eastern European grandparents are deeply involved in the upbringing of grandchildren (Robila, 2003; Zhurzhenko, 2004), as is described in more detail in the grandparent-related theme. The meaning and significance of maintaining the ties with grandparents for these families cannot be overemphasized. Similarly, extended family ties are very strong as well, and as many parents say, maintaining their native language in children is very important for family communication during occasional visits to their countries of origin, even if there would be no other benefits from the knowledge.

Ivana: Maybe [our children] won't use this language, but their grandparents don't know English, and *just for this reason* I think that it is important for them to know Bulgarian. We've been to Bulgaria twice and they really enjoyed it, because here [in the U.S.] we don't have the extended family. So, just because of the communication when they go [to Bulgaria], they need to know Bulgarian.

Another reason why learning native language is perceived as very important by these parents is because of the side benefits that come from it. Among such advantages parents named being better prepared for learning other languages, geography, literature, and overall "expansion of interests" that allows the possibility to "look at the world from two different perspectives." In addition, both mothers and fathers in the study are well aware of the research that shows benefits of bilingualism for the children's intellectual development.

Valentina: Physiologically, being bilingual is helping to develop your brain, so even if they will not use it for their work or for their communication, just being exposed to that at an early age is healthy and helpful to their development.

Daniel: [My daughter] will see the world from a different perspective, even though she might not use Romanian language in this country, but the fact that she knows a foreign language is a plus. And as a scientist, I think it will help her develop her brain better. I don't feel that keeping things to minimum is beneficial. The more languages you learn, the brain is gonna be more active. So, she only has things to gain from this.

Galina, a mother from Bulgaria married to a Romanian man, spoke about raising her child trilingual, and inevitable challenges along the way when the child is confused and mixes up the languages. Although she realizes that Bulgarian and Romanian are not the most popular languages and may not translate into financial benefits for her son, she strongly believes that such exposure has enormous benefits for his mind, and will make their son not afraid of learning any other language. Galina explains,

It is very important because it opens his mind to languages, and we speak three languages: Bulgarian, Romanian and English. So it opens a window for [children] without any effort for them. The effort is for the parents. Every bi-lingual, tri-

lingual family should do it. I have read about how the brain is distributed, and there is a special part in the brain responsible for the language, so you can either open it and develop it or not, but it doesn't take away resources from other things... so you should open it [laughter].

Several parents approached developing native language skills in their children as an investment for children's future possibilities and education, and expressed a desire for their children to not stop at learning their native language only.

Daniel: It's very important, I encourage [my daughters] to speak [Romanian], their native language, I would love for them to not only speak their native language but maybe two, three, more languages, as many as possible. The more languages you speak, the smarter you are and you can deal with reality better.

Anatoly: It's a great opportunity for them to have another language at pretty much no expense. I think it's a very good investment, it's like everything in education – it will not show up tomorrow, but [it] will some day.

Dragomir: [Our son] can speak two languages [English and Bosnian]. And of course, we brought our culture in here, and [our son] is gonna absorb an American culture. And of course, having two cultures inside, he will be stronger. His views are going to be wider, way wider than average views because he is gonna have something else. In our country, we say, "You are as smart as many languages you know." So, it would be great, we'll try to keep our language that he knows.

Considering the importance of preserving their native language, what are specific strategies these families use to do it? First of all, in all families parents are speaking their native language at home with each other and with their children. Second, when the child is born in the U.S., for the first several years of life, in the majority of cases grandparents are present in the households (as will be explained in detail in the grandparents theme), and help enormously with native language development. Some families also send their children to their home countries for the summer to stay with grandparents and learn the language.

A third way of developing and maintaining their native language in children is to expose children to parents' friends who came from the same country. Often, these parents

build friendships with such families, thus not only celebrating holidays together but also providing opportunities for their children to play with children who speak the same language (this strategy sometimes fails because children speak English with each other). The problem with ethnic friends, however, is their high mobility and low availability. Immigrant professionals are highly dispersed throughout the country and may frequently move following employment opportunities (Rumbaut, 1997). High mobility also means that they are less likely to reside in ethnic communities which would provide opportunities and resources for native language development. In addition, the number of ethnic communities with Eastern Europeans in the U.S. is not high, compared with other immigrant groups such as Latinos or Asians.

Because of the aforementioned factors and a strong influence from daycare centers and schools, children of immigrants rapidly learn English, which becomes their first and preferred language. Many parents in the study state that they have to make intentional efforts to teach their children their native language at home. They realize that their children have an opportunity to grow up bilingual which may be realized *only if* significant efforts are invested. That is often hard to do due to busy lives (see time-related theme) and lack of ethnic supports. As a result, children do not develop into balanced bilinguals and instead become dominant in one language, English. This finding is not surprising and is consistent with the literature on bilingualism (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Fishman, 1978). Thus, children increasingly answer their parents in English, which for some parents represents a very painful experience. Here is a story from Ivana, a mother of two boys:

This is another challenge - to keep them bilingual. And with our older son it was successful until now, because I would spend time on the weekends to teach him

Bulgarian, how to write and read and he was doing well. But with having so much homework to do, we are behind right now with his Bulgarian language. But with the younger son it's the biggest challenge because he started daycare earlier, at 20 months. We never stopped talking Bulgarian at home, [both our sons] spent all the summer in Bulgaria with their grandparents, and his Bulgarian was pretty good. But since then he hasn't been exposed to too many Bulgarians... it would be easier if we had some other Bulgarian friends to speak with, but right now we don't. He understands everything we talk in Bulgarian, but he answers in English and *this breaks my heart*, because although he was born here in the States, I want him to know his predecessors' language, to know a little bit about Bulgaria, the culture, because I think that he has to have his national pride. If not the pride, then to carry the difference, because his origin is from another part of the world.

Similar to Ivana, Daniel, a father of two girls, and Diana, a mother of a boy and a girl, share their experiences of having children speak English. For them, as for other parents, when a child loses her native language it is as if a parent is losing a part of his child, and a part of himself, his heritage, and the past.

Daniel: [Our daughter] feels way more confident in English and she speaks very well. She still understands Romanian perfectly, but she would talk back to us in English, period. We lost it! I'm afraid that *we lost her*. And this is the one that was around Romanians for a longer time. Now, we have the little one who started picking up Romanian because her grandmother is here, and we won't have anybody around soon, and I'm afraid that this one might be a non-Romanian speaker.

Diana: [My son and daughter] speak English to each other, or half-Romanian, half-English. When I went to visit my family, my Mom couldn't understand them, they were talking half-and-half. And I felt so horrible... I saw that through my Mom's eyes, and... [with profound sorrow in voice] *you just don't get to them*. We don't realize it because we understand what they are saying, but for my mother, [the grandchildren] began to look strange.

It is obvious that preserving native language in children means a great deal to these immigrant parents; however, their efforts often fail due to the outside influences. Children become, in a sense, "strangers" to parents, even more so with grandparents. How do parents deal with that side effect of immigration? There is a range of adaptations found among the participants of the study that depend on their circumstances. As

described by Portes and Rumbaut (1996), an “additive” approach to balancing two languages is more likely to be found among the immigrants of higher socioeconomic background, at least in theory. While encouraging children to learn English, parents continue providing them with all possible opportunities to develop native language and expect successful language acquisition in return (that would include being able to not only understand, but also to read and to write in the native language). For example, one such family that has been living in a Northern state for 13 years with close proximity to a small ethnic community and extended family members who also immigrated to the U.S. from Russia, is in an advantageous position that allows them make the following statement.

Valentina: One thing that we noticed and that is not accepted in our family [is that] we didn’t like that in many Russian immigrant families, or any Eastern European families, the communication style between kids and parents [is such that] parents talk in Russian, or Ukrainian, or Romanian, and kids answer in English, and that certainly we didn’t like, and it will never be accepted in our family.

Not all immigrants in professional ranks, however, can take such a stance because they simply do not have the social capital to help children with language learning. Also as described by Portes and Rumbaut (2001), geographic mobility comes with a cost of not having language maintenance supports. The reality for many immigrants is that, despite their efforts, they are losing an uphill battle. Therefore, they adapt a more realistic position and cope with the situation by lowering the standards for language acquisition among their children, as illustrated by these narratives from Magda and Oleg.

Magda: I’ve heard that other parents force their children to speak their language, and when the kids speak English they pretend like they don’t understand. We didn’t do that. But it is important for me that she can understand, and at some level [that] she can speak Romanian, even if she doesn’t speak very correctly, and if she speaks better English... I guess it’s normal.

Oleg: [Our youngest child who was born in the U.S.] has never been exposed to the Russian-speaking environment in Russia, and so it will be even more difficult for us to keep Russian for him, at least a good level of Russian. So, I'm sure we'll be able to make him understand and speak some sort of Russian, but I think it will be really challenging to have him read good Russian literature, and to understand [great books] and to judge them, so this is a big challenge.

To summarize, it is extremely important for the parents in the study to preserve their native language, which they view as carrier of their culture and heritage. Having children speak their native language means that they are able to absorb some of the parental culture and do not become disconnected. It also allows maintaining communication with grandparents and extended family that play a significant role in their lives. In addition, knowing more than one language is beneficial for children's intellectual development and is also considered by these participants as an investment in education. More often than not, however, parental efforts to transmit their language to children fail in some degree, and parents settle for less than previously expected.

Theme 3. Ethnic Identity and Biculturalism:
"I Don't Think Our Kids Are Torn Between Two Worlds... We Are."

A theme, closely related to language, which emerged from the interviews, was that of biculturalism and ethnic identity. As presented in the review of the literature in chapter two, the issue of ethnic identity, or answering the question "Where do I come from?" is a complex one for the children of immigrants. For the immigrants themselves, finding a way to reconcile their past and present lives can be a tough puzzle as well. This theme is broken into three sub-themes: (1) ethnic identity of parents, (2) ethnic identity of the children of immigrants, and (3) biculturalism.

Sub-theme 1. Ethnic Identity of Immigrant Parents: “We Don’t Belong Anywhere Anymore.”

Based on the three perspectives proposed by researchers (living “between two worlds,” total assimilation, and living “in two worlds”), I asked the participants of the study where *they* see themselves and their children. Although these participants express commitment to the United States, are appreciative of their adopted nation, and view it as their permanent home, they also cherish their heritage and maintain a strong bond to their countries of origin. Below are characteristic answers from parents that show that the status of one’s legal documents does not entirely reflect how one feels at heart. Ivana is a mother of two boys from Bulgaria; she and her family have been living in the U.S. for over nine years and have become naturalized U.S. citizens.

Ivana: I don’t think that our kids are torn between two worlds... *We are.* Because we just came, and we are so attached to our old world, and we strive to survive in this new world, between these two worlds, but not our kids.

Magda and her husband came from Romania, had their two daughters born in the U.S., and have been living in the U.S. for the past eleven years. This family holds permanent residency status and says that “next year we’re gonna apply for citizenship.”

Magda: I think we are more conflicted than our children because we really grew up in Romania and now we live here. They were born here, so I don’t think they will be very conflicted. They *are* Americans.

In these parents’ opinions, the immigration process is much harder for them than it is for their children. They believe that it is easier for children to enter a new society and make it feel like home because they have not acquired much in their home countries yet, or, in cases when they were born in the U.S., there is nothing to lose. This is not the case for parents, who still feel strongly attached to their home counties, miss their extended families and friends, and try to maintain the connection via phone calls, e-mails, and

visits. It is a state of “ambiguous loss,” when physically absent family members continue to be psychologically present in the minds and hearts of the first generation immigrants, a potentially stressful situation (Boss, 1999; 2002).

In general, there is a range of adaptations to their new life among immigrant families that, in part, depends on the circumstances of their entrance into the United States. Some participants left their native countries more than 10 years ago, with the intent “to immigrate,” and never went back to visit. Others came to the U.S. “to pursue education,” “to continue doing research and remain scientists,” and the decision to stay emerged over time, after they got to know the country.

Vladimir: We didn’t immigrate. We came to pursue education. We didn’t cut connections back home, didn’t sell our apartment, didn’t say goodbyes to everyone. We came [to the U.S.], looked around, got to know life here, and we realized that it would be good for us and our children, so we decided to stay here. But that doesn’t mean that we will never go to Russia. My wife and children are constantly visiting Russia, and I have many plans there. We try to and we will continue maintaining the relationship with our relatives. We have chosen not one country, but a life between two countries.

Thus, while some participants made a U.S. their home from the beginning and cut the ties with the past, others attempt to “live in both worlds.” They try their best to maintain continuity between their past and present lives, and visit their countries of origin (on average, the frequency of visits ranges from once every year to once every five years). However, they have to constantly negotiate their place in those countries, as Nicoleta describes.

Nicoleta: We are *nowhere*. It is gonna be easier for [our daughter]. But we don’t belong anywhere anymore. When we go to Romania we feel good, but we feel the difference in the relationship with our friends and family because we changed, and we notice that they are different. So it is very nice to go back home and it is very nice to come back home here. Because we feel like we don’t belong there anymore.

Interviewer: So, where is “home?”

Nicoleta: I just said. We go *home*, and then we come back *home*. So, it is nowhere... In your heart, you have two homes, but in fact you don't belong here and you don't belong there. It is a lot easier for the second generation, for our kids.

How much easier is this process for the children of the participants?

Sub-theme 2. Ethnic Identity of Children of Immigrants: “Our Kids Are More American Than Anything Else.”

To better understand the experiences of the participants' children, it is important to provide more details about the age of children at the time of immigration and their place of birth. Out of 18 children of the participants in the study, 11 are U.S.-born. The remaining seven children (aged from 1 to 10 years old; average 5 years old at the time of immigration) belong to the 1.5 generation – they are children born abroad who came to the U.S. at a very early age. Researchers often group them together with the U.S.-born children of immigrant parents, a classic second generation. Indeed, their experiences are very similar. As mentioned earlier, in these parents' opinions, immigration process is “much easier” for children than it is for parents.

Daniel: [Our children] were born here, they grow up here, and they *are* Americans. They don't feel like Romanians now, they don't even wanna speak back Romanian, although they understand. They speak English perfectly, better than we do. And definitely they feel this society is better. They are Americans, period.

In the process of interviews, several parents looked deeper into the topic and wondered whether the issue of ethnic identity for their children was all that simple. They began to question what culture their children would identify with the most, or whether a child could be considered a part of a culture if he only knows it as taught by his parents, without a personal experience of living there.

Aleksey: From a kid's perspective, he has Ukrainian parents. But he doesn't speak Ukrainian at all, he never visited Ukraine, he has no idea what it's like being

there, yet he is not a 100% American. I think this is a challenge... [Like in that movie] with an American-born Chinese who was asked a question how she feels about China. And she said, "I'm not a Chinese, even though I look like a Chinese I've never been to the country. I never spoke the language. So why are you asking me this question?" I'm just afraid that our son will grow up and will not be able to fully identify himself with either side.

Anatoly: I'm not sure [our children] are really bicultural. They are bilingual but they are not bicultural. And I don't know what that would mean. Here, in America, they speak Russian, sure, but are they culturally Russian? Now, if you are talking about [my wife and me], we really do have residuals of Russian culture and there are conflicting things in life. But [our] kids, I'm not sure that they [feel conflicted]. I [wonder], what would be the culture that they pick?

Three other parents in the study, who initially very confidently answered that their children *are* Americans "more than anything else," towards the end of the interviews shared that their children had few friends among Americans, and that worried them. In one instance, a 10-year-old boy who arrived in the U.S. as an infant, made a lot of friends among the "international children" throughout these years, but had only one friend among "Americans." That only American friend is a classmate with a serious heart disease, who "looks different from the rest of Americans, is small and introverted." Although such lack of friendships with Americans can be partially explained by the fact that this particular family lives in a community with mostly international families, the boy has 18 classmates who are all native-born Americans. His mother describes.

Ivana: We have been living for all these nine years more in international communities, and we communicate more with Korean and Latin American families than with Americans. And [...] we noticed that [our] kids feel more relaxed when they communicate with international children, from international marriages, with foreigners, than with Americans. And this is something that strikes me all the time. My little son doesn't have a friend. He has 18 kids in his school that are Americans, and he doesn't have any single friend. Which is strange, isn't it?

Another couple similarly engaged in a discussion of their son's social life. Their 16-year-old son came to the U.S. at the age of three, has acquired unaccented English,

and would not be identified as not “American” in any way. Parents feel that he has adapted to the U.S. “great,” just like other children of immigrants that they know. At the same time, parents notice that their son feels more comfortable with children of other Russian immigrants who all nevertheless prefer to communicate in English. Parents question whether there is a connection between their son’s avoidance to invite his American friends home and them not being “real Americans.” It is interesting that this couple described themselves as not “real Americans” despite the fact that they have been living in the U.S. for over 13 years, speak English fluently, and are naturalized American citizens.

The rest of the participants mentioned that while children may feel unusual at times, simply because their parents are different from their classmates’ parents, it does not cause major problems. All parents in the study have a good command of the English language and are Americanized in their lifestyle and other ways. Many participants reveal, however, that in their personal lives *they* often have a hard time making friends with Americans because of the “cultural differences.” Perhaps, due to their own difficulties with social relationships in the U.S., they are more attuned to this aspect of their children’s life.

Anatoly: One of the really big challenges for us raising kids here is that it is hard for us to have Americans as friends, American parents of our kids’ friends. If you look at the school, the other parents know each other so well, they talk to each other all the time, visit each others’ houses... We don’t do that, so we do not communicate a lot. Us, not having a good social network here, is the biggest challenge for kids, it’s an issue of *belonging*. And belonging is: how many friends your parents have and where they are in the social network, not necessarily professional network, where we are paid a lot, but in the social network of friends.

Although the majority of the participants said that overall it may be easier for their children to figure out their ethnic identity, one couple gave a different answer. They

believe that immigration is much easier for parents because they are adults and have their identity formed, while the children of immigrants may get lost “in translation” and not fully identify with either group. Their opinion is based on the experience of their friends, a “successful family with good jobs and decent lifestyle,” whose teenage son committed suicide, in their view, because of an unresolved ethnic identity crisis. That boy came to the U.S. at the age of seven, and “just couldn’t feel 100% American, couldn’t feel 100% Russian.”

Tatiana: Because we came here as established people we have our identity, we are Russian. We know what kind of friends we like, it’s pretty easy for us, but our children need to establish themselves. Children cannot find themselves among their peers very often.

The scope of the current study does not allow for a more specific conclusion than to say that an immigrant youth’s ethnic identity development is a complex process, depending on many factors. More data are needed, particularly from the immigrant children themselves. This sub-theme will be concluded with a discussion of possible intergenerational conflicts and cultural gaps between immigrant parents and children.

Consistent with immigrant literature, the culture of origin continues to influence these parents’ family interactions, traditions, and rituals. They continue looking at the world through dual frames of reference (Falicov, 2003; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Because they have background and the experiences of life in the countries of origin and their children do not, many parents are afraid that there will be a “cultural gap,” a “disconnect” between them and their children.

Nicoleta: Conflict between generations is always an issue, but the fact that [our daughter] grows up in a culture different than ours only complicates things.

Julia: For us the danger is that [our son] will grow up, and we will have some misunderstandings just because he grew up without all the background that we

had, and we will have a cultural gap. The conflict will be aggravated by the fact that his upbringing is different from ours, and we cannot provide him with the same environment that we had. [Our experiences] may not have been positive experiences, but I think they shaped us in a positive way – that element is missing. For example, it's hard for us to make him appreciate all the positive things that [he has] going for him, and I think it's one of the sources of additional conflict. I don't know how to resolve that.

As Julia's narrative demonstrates, immigrants' past is often filled with hardships and struggles that made them seek better life for their children in the United States. However, as they provide their children with many comforts and opportunities, immigrant parents see that their children grow up in a very different environment. How do these parents try to prevent that feared disconnect from occurring and make their children appreciate all the great things and opportunities that they have? The following narratives describe specific strategies participants use "to try to minimize the conflict."

Magda: We try to go to Romania every two or three years so [that our children] will have a broader perspective, see other countries, other cultures, and will appreciate more what they have after seeing how people live [elsewhere].

Nicoleta: We send [our daughter] to Romania, and have grandma come here, and speaking Romanian, and sharing our culture with our daughter so that she can appreciate that. If she is not immersed in our culture it will be very easy for her to deny her heritage, to refuse to speak the language, to refuse to go back to Romania, to hate everything related with that, our background and our language.

Olga: We [never took our children back to Belarus], but we do tell them about what it was like when we were growing up. I tell them a lot of stories about my parents. We watch a lot of old Russian movies that tell them a lot about the atmosphere of when we were growing up, and I think that kind of [helps] a little bit.

While teaching their children about where they come from, immigrant parents do not resist acculturation and allow American culture to dominate because they view it as more "functional" in their situation.

Olga: In our family our kids are more American than anything else. But at the same time, they know a little bit of Russian culture. It should make them richer

intellectually. But it would be bad if Russian culture would be a dominating culture [because] then you go to the outside world, and it's America – that would be bad. In our family, American culture is the basic culture that we live with, but we are trying to enhance it with what we know, from where we came from, our roots.

Olga's narrative brings us to the next sub-theme, biculturalism in children of immigrants, and how it is negotiated by these immigrant families.

Sub-theme 3. Biculturalism: “It Broadens Their Horizons, and They Are More Interesting People.”

In spite of concerns about losing a connection to children, many participants are glad that their children grow up with two cultures and two languages. They believe that it enriches a person with “broader views,” and, overall, makes him “stronger.” Having two different perspectives on things, seeing “two sides of an issue” enables a person to choose the best, regardless of whether the “best” comes from an American or Ukrainian culture. As one mother said, being bicultural “opens a possibility of criticism and being objective.” Another participant spoke about benefits from being exposed to two cultures that may be particularly helpful for life in a multi-cultural society like the United States.

Valentina: Being bicultural helps to understand the diversity in this culture, and being more tolerant to people from other cultures, and generally it's good for kids' growing and knowing. And also it broadens their horizons, they know more, and, compared to their peers, they are more interesting people.

Participants believe that although they come from different countries, that “culturally” Europeans are not that much different than Americans. Many of them shared that they feel comfortable living in the U.S. because of the “tolerant society” of their “adoptive” country towards immigrants and “different people.” These parents are appreciative of not having to give up any of their values and beliefs.

Oleg: I don't think we gave up anything; it is very easy in this country to keep your own values and your own beliefs without being disturbed by any other beliefs, or changing them too much.

Aleksey: [In the U.S.], you don't have to lose anything. American society [is] no longer a melting pot. It's more like a *mosaic*, which implies that every individual in this country can preserve and carry on his or her own cultural beliefs, so there is nothing you have to give up, you just gain extra, that's how we view it.

A common message from the parents was that they are happy with the freedom they have to build the kind of life for their families they want. Whether they are parenting their children or interpreting their immigration experience, they apply the “additive” approach of taking the best from both cultures, with American being the dominating one.

Ovidiu: Being bicultural is advantageous, but you have to stick to one culture, and draw the best from the other culture. You are here, in the U.S., stick with American culture. And whenever you see that an American culture is not good...

Diana: Then use Romanian culture.

Ovidiu: But try to stick to one set and improve it. Don't speak only Romanian so that your children wouldn't know any English. Don't stay in an enclave where everybody speak only Romanian – don't do that.

Diana: I think this is your duty to [learn English]. This is your duty to have a respect for this country that adopted you.

Ovidiu: From the practical point, you live in this society and culture, adopt to it, and bring the best from your culture. But if you came here, don't try to mold the American society after you. You have to mold to the American society and bring the best from your culture.

These stories illustrate the complex process of defining themselves that the immigrants and children of immigrants are going through. As the literature indicates, the immigrants are indeed situated between two worlds and two cultures, which may be a challenge (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994). Overall, however, the majority of parents in the study feel that their children are adapting pretty well to their circumstances. Particularly in the long term, parents believe, their children will appreciate having more than one culture in their background. While having potentially minor disadvantages

compared with their peers in the U.S. and with peers in the native countries short-term, parents believe that on the whole, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Vladimir: Children do speak two languages, do live in two cultures, and because of that, it all compliments each other. Compared to their peers here [in the U.S.], their level of [English] language may be a little bit lower. If we bring them to Russia, their level of [Russian] language is again a little bit lower than that of their peers. But if you look *overall*, in the sum of things, they know much more, they have an experience of more things. If you judge separately, they may be a little bit lower here and there. But overall, they have more advantages than both Russian and American children.

To summarize this theme, ethnic identity development among immigrants is a complex and sensitive issue. The first generation immigrants are strongly rooted in their countries of origin, although often feeling like they belong neither there nor in their new country. Their children, the second generation immigrants, are considerably more comfortable identifying as American. Overall, however, the children of immigrants benefit from the membership in two cultures because they can take the best from the two worlds.

Theme 4. Grandparents and Extended Family: “In Our Culture, the Grandparents Are Very Involved with Grandchildren, Their Daily Upbringing”

From the responses of the participants of the study, it becomes clear that family is very important to them. And, consistent with the literature on Eastern European families (Robila, 2003; 2004), their definition of family is broad; it includes not only their immediate family members, but also their extended family: parents, siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts, and other relatives. When asked about the gains and losses of immigration for their family, the vast majority of participants first explained what a family meant for them, like Daniel does in the quote below.

Daniel: In Romania, we understand family as [myself, my wife, children], *and* our parents and relatives, that's a big family. So, if you include those, then the answer would be different what the gains and losses are.

The gains of immigration turned out to be for the immediate family only: an improved economic situation, a more comfortable lifestyle, obtaining a graduate degree, an opportunity to do science, having an interesting job, and providing a safe environment with many opportunities for children. At the same time, it is extended family ties and connections that are sacrificed. The participants unanimously cited "extended family and friends" as the biggest loss due to immigration. To compensate for this loss, some strategies immigrant parents employ are teaching their children the native language, telling them stories about extended family, and staying in touch via phone calls, e-mails, and visits to their countries of origin, as described in more detail in the earlier themes.

When asked about traditions from their home countries related to childrearing, the most salient response related to the involvement of extended family and a central role of grandparents in the process, a finding consistent with literature on Eastern European families (Robila, 2003; Staykova, 2004; Zhurzhenko, 2004).

Sergiu: The major difference [from the U.S.] is that in our native country, parenting is supported by the extended family. [The relationships] are tighter knit than those in the U.S.: grandparents, godparents, uncles, cousins -- they all help in raising children.

Participants shared their perception that in the U.S., while families are valued in general, and family reunions are popular, few grandparents care for grandchildren on a daily basis. Far distances between family members, extreme emphasis on independence, focus on one's own needs, and less integrated relationships dominate.

Conversely, Eastern European families are characterized by strong intergenerational ties, interdependence, and collectivism (Robila, 2004). Making a

comparison between the parent-child relationship in the U.S. and in their home countries, study participants mention that parents' close involvement in children's lives does not end when a child turns 18. The notion of considering the parental job "done" after a child turns 18 is non-existent in the culture. Parents continue to support their adult children and are directly involved throughout the children's life. To illustrate, one father in the study shared a story of an American family who lost their house in the hurricane and had to move in with their parents. He was outraged to learn that parents made their children pay rent. Overall, as evidenced by the literature and participants' answers, it becomes obvious that there is a deep and continuous involvement of parents in the lives of adult children. It is expected that adult children can ask for any help from parents, including care of the grandchildren.

Ivana: Usually [in Bulgaria] the grandparents are *so* involved with their grandchildren, which is not very typical here. Here, every immediate family is taking care of their problems and the grandparents are just taking the kids on the weekend for pizza [at] Chucky-Cheese or something. But they are not so much involved in their upbringing.

Nicoleta: Grandparents -- that's a big one! Having grandparents involved in the family is so wonderful, for the grandparents, and for the kids. And you know that there is a relationship which is very strong which is forming. To help care for our daughter my mom came for 6 months, and then my husband's mom came for 6 months. And they took turns until she turned three. Who else do you think is more appropriate? This is it. I grew up with my parents, but every summer I would go to my grandmother, so she played a very important role in my life, and I want to have my Mom do the same for my daughter.

One of the challenges of immigration for parents is not having their extended family members around, not having their support, and not being part of the "big" family. Parents in the study wish for a full relationship and frequent contacts with grandparents for their children and are not content with the occasional visits and phone calls. The reality is that parents are busy working, the grandparents are half a globe away, and, thus,

children are left on their own, gaining early independence and being influenced by peers and the outside world. The latter is a big concern for parents, as evidenced by the narrative from Vladimir, a father of a teenage boy and a seven-year-old girl.

Vladimir: A disadvantage of having children grow up in America [is] keeping children so far away from their grandparents. [Although] there are contacts with grandparents, for example, our daughter was two times in Russia, but it was quite a short contact: three months and one month out of seven years. It doesn't really help to build relationships with grandparents; it is not a full relationship as you can expect. The distance from grandmothers and grandfathers plays a role. [In the U.S.], the influence of their friends, peers is more pronounced just because we are always busy and there are no grandparents to send a child to. Thus, [our daughter] is more on her own, and she is more independent and she can choose what to do, whether to watch TV, whether to play computer games. There is more influence of the outer world and less influence of the family world, our world.

Another mother's comment shows that they also want to increase the influence of the family world, and, based on their actions, it is very important to her and her husband. This particular family sacrificed better paying jobs and living in a state with more attractions to provide their two children with frequent interactions with grandparents and extended family.

Diana: In Romania, the family was called a "cell of the society" in the communist system, and the family *is* very close at home. I am not sure if this is the same here. This is why we came to Louisiana, to have family for the kids. We could have stayed on the East coast and do probably better there from some standpoints [financially]. We have been in Philadelphia and New York, you have much more to do there than what you have here. [But] the reason why we came here is for our children to have a family, grandparents, and uncles. Otherwise we would be there alone, visiting things in New York and Philadelphia, not having anybody around for holidays or birthdays; moments you want to share.

Despite the fact that these families of professionals moved thousands of miles away from their home countries and families (only 2 out of 12 families in the study have extended family members residing in the U.S.), in many cases grandparents are heavily involved in daily childcare. Typically, when a new grandchild is born, grandparents come

to the U.S. and stay for as long as their visa allows them (usually 6 months at a time). Often, when a grandmother's time is up and she has to leave the U.S., a grandfather comes in her place to care for grandchildren. They "take turns," as was described earlier by Nicoleta. Sometimes, however, family circumstances change and grandparents are not able to continue their visits. They may have their own or spouses' health problems to deal with or they may need to help their other children with childcare, or, if their own parents are still alive, grandparents care for their aging parents. There is a strong tradition in Eastern Europe for the "intergenerational obligation of care of older generations," and placing parents in nursing homes is socially strongly discouraged (Robila & Krishnakumar, 2003, p. 31). Thus, not having that support from grandparents becomes a big challenge for immigrant parents, who are torn between wanting the best for their immediate family and extended family. Ivana, a working mother of two boys from Bulgaria, whose mother stayed in the U.S. for 9 months after a grandson was born, tells about her dilemma.

Ivana: It wouldn't be fair to my grandmother, it wouldn't be fair to my brother and his new family to get [my mother] here to help us... But we need her *so badly*. It's a double-edged sword. I don't want to be happy at the expense of my extended family. And it is very difficult. There is so much guilt on my side. I was the person to say, we can do [it], maybe we can try to go to the U.S. and to see how it will be. I feel so guilty; it's like splitting the family. The attachment is so big there.

The transition from the interdependent and collectivistic way of life to a more independent one is difficult for immigrant parents, whether they are from Eastern Europe (Gold, 1989; Kovalcic, 1996), India (Patel et al., 1996, Pettys & Balgopal, 1998), China (Cheng Gorman, 1998; Xie, Xia, & Zhou, 2005), Jordan (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1994), or any other collectivistic culture (Bush et al., 2005; Kwak, 2003). Parents in the current

study offered examples of the struggle of not having a support network. Julia, a mother from Ukraine of a four-year-old, spoke about the daily uncertainty of whether she would be able to go to work or would have to stay home with a sick child. Olga, a mother from Belarus of two teenagers, talked about a lack of attention and pressure that would help her boys succeed in school. She brought up examples of other immigrant families where children did well in school because grandparents were present in the household while parents worked. Overall, several participants shared that they had to become more autonomous and self-reliant in the U.S. as well as develop independence in their children.

Galina: [In the U.S.] parents take care of their kids, and are relying more on themselves. Back home [in Bulgaria] they rely more on help from others, to a great extent the grandparents take care [of the grandchildren]. And this changes the whole thing. That's why here you try to make your children more independent, because you want them to be able to do things for themselves, because you don't have time to do everything for them.

To fairly represent the responses of the participants, it is important to note that participation of the grandparents is not always free of problems and may come with a cost. For instance, Galina commented that heavy involvement of grandparents in the family life of their children and grandchildren can be problematic in terms of boundary maintenance. In addition, while appreciating the contributions made by the grandparents to childrearing, she spoke about its drawbacks for child development and showed a preference for an American way of upbringing.

Galina: [In Bulgaria] parents are more involved, and for longer than [in the U.S.]. I think we are more informal with our parents. I would never be worried to ask my parents to do anything for me, any time, but here it is different. [In the U.S.] once you grow up you don't ask your parents [for help]. [On the other hand] there is more overprotection in Eastern Europe than [in the U.S.]. Because grandparents are overprotective, the children don't learn to communicate with other children, they become too shy, they don't know how to be on their own. [In the U.S.] good parents raise their children to be more self-confident, more independent.

[Children] are let from early age to make decisions on their own, they are not overprotected.

Many other parents spoke about the desire to raise their children independent and autonomous because they perceive such qualities as especially important for success in the U.S. The theme of independence in children will be addressed in more detail further. To conclude, below is a quote from a father of two children from Russia who also touches on an accompanying problem, a lack of time.

Oleg: I think this is the greatest challenge once one comes into another country where you don't have relatives. We don't have anybody, so we cannot expect that we will get help from anybody. We have to rely on ourselves, and this takes a lot of time because there are a lot of things that we have to do.

Overall, for these immigrant families from Eastern Europe extended family ties are strong and significant. As much as circumstances allow, they continue maintaining the relationships with extended family and arrange opportunities for their children to develop relationships with grandparents. In return, parents continue receiving help in childrearing from grandparents. However, such a collectivistic way of life is not always possible due to family circumstances and big distances. Living in a new environment makes immigrants realize the need to become more independent and self-reliant, and to raise their children that way. The theme of time for immigrant families is going to be presented in more detail next.

Theme 5. Time Bind: “You Don’t Have a Lot of Time for Your Kids Here, and You Need to Live With That.”

Just like many American working parents are caught up in a time bind (Hochschild, 1997), immigrant parents in the study are struggling to balance work and family life. It is a particularly difficult undertaking because they also have to learn to navigate in a new social environment, including medical, educational, work, and social

systems. Immigrants are also dealing with the additional challenge of having to establish themselves financially in a new country. From the interviews with these immigrant professionals, it seems that they have high standards for success in the U.S. and feel that they have to catch up on all the years “lost,” as Eva, an accountant and a mother of a 10-year old describes.

Eva: We really work as much as we can. We have to do three times better because we [have been here] for only four years. So by the time our son is in college we want to be able to do much better, to be equal to any other parent financially, to pay for his college, to do something good for him. And we need to push it three times harder.

Immigrant parents are highly motivated to work hard to be successful in the U.S., to make a better life for their children, and “to be a positive example of what we can achieve in life.” Realizing goals in a new country may be particularly difficult, despite immigrants’ drive for success, and requires significant effort. Time becomes an issue, as the following narrative reflects.

Oleg: [T]here are a lot of things that we have to do. And this is in addition to the fact that we have to establish ourselves in this country. We have to basically set up some level of financial well-being and that requires much more efforts from us than from the equal American person [who is not starting fresh in a new country]. So, that takes time as well, and we have much less time for communication with our children.

Galina, a recent graduate and a new assistant professor at a university, compares her native Bulgaria with the U.S. in term of time use and work culture. She, like many other parents in the study, definitely feels pressed for time. Galina comments that the longer she stays in the U.S., the more she “blends into the system” and the “workaholic culture.” She becomes busier and has less time for her son because of the need to be competitive in the work environment. Such problem of overwork and time bind is nothing new for many working American parents, as evidenced by the literature

(DeGraaf, 2003, Doherty & Carlson, 2002; Hochschild, 1997), but it is often an adjustment to immigrants from other cultures.

Galina: [In the U.S.] you are more rushed, you have more things to do. Time was never such a big deal back home, people there don't work that much. Maybe things are changing now, but they don't need to spend that much time on their work. [When] I was in grad school [here], I had work to do during the nights and on weekends, and now I am teaching but still I need to prepare at home, so it's not like you go [to work] and you finish your thing, and you are done. [In the U.S.] you do have much less free time than [in Bulgaria]. Once you work here, you don't have energy when you come back home to also work with your child and teach him.

Similarly, Nicoleta, a mother from Romania, shares her struggle with the time bind.

Nicoleta: American culture to me is *work*. It's work! Everybody works and works hard. And by the end of the day you are proud of what you've done because there are ways by which you get a positive feedback, and you are happy to see your students thrive, you publish one more paper, get another grant in, and then people call you up and ask you to write a chapter... But you don't spend much time with your kid.

Not being able to spend adequate time with their children, particularly very young ones, is a concern for all the parents interviewed. However, when one lives with a dual frame of reference, like immigrants do, comparison with the native country is inevitable. For instance, 11 children in the study were born in the United States, and the immigrant parents had to do what many American parents of infants do... go back to work after 6 weeks of *unpaid* leave. Although many of them had grandparents stay with grandchildren at home, these parents could not help compare their current situation to what they would do back home.

Aleksey: [In the U.S.], if you got both parents working, the time off you can take to give a birth to your child is very limited, while most women in Ukraine take off six months easily, and a lot of them stay with their kids for a year, and they go back and get their job back. It's not the case here. So, really, you don't have a lot of time for your kid here, and you need to live with that.

In Aleksey's native Ukraine, many parents prefer to care for infants "at home until they are eighteen months old, at least" (Pearson, 1990, p. 95). While the dimension and purpose of the present work does not allow exploring in detail the situation with childcare benefits in all Eastern European countries, I will provide a brief overview of family policies for Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, three countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union, and are countries of origin for 10 of the participants in the study. Having information about family benefits in these countries can be helpful to better understand the dissatisfaction of parents in the study with supports available for parents in the United States.

Up until the 1990, maternity leave in the countries of the Soviet Union was *three years*, with the guarantee of getting one's job back. A generous family-benefits package included partially *paid* 18 months maternity leave, with another 18 months of unpaid leave, if desired (Pearson, 1990). Although financial support did not involve large sums of money, it was helpful, and also came with other benefits. These benefits included: free baby food from "Milk Kitchens," flexible work schedules for working mothers, 14 days of fully paid leave to care for a sick child annually (available for both mothers and fathers), and priority placement on a waiting list for new housing (Pearson, 1990). Despite many disadvantageous features of life in the communist system, such circumstances allowed parents to spend time with their infant children and adequately care for them. Other Eastern European countries had similar policies and practices during communism, that supported women's roles as mothers and workers (see also Robila & Krishnakumar, 2003).

Parents in the study also find the costs of childcare in the U.S. very high. While most of them are happy with the quality of day care, they find its cost “just overwhelming” and “over the top.” One father comments that while many people discuss the expenses of sending their children to college, in his experience “a [high quality] daycare cost is comparable to the tuition in colleges.” An immigrant dual frame of reference explains why participants constantly compare their current situation to that in their countries of origin. To follow with an example of former Soviet countries mentioned above, its citizens enjoyed liberal maternity leave policies, high-quality standardized child-care facilities and after-school programs, all at a nominal cost (Isipa & Elliott, 2003).

Overall, all families in the study are dual-career families with both wives and husbands in professional occupations (with the exception of one wife who is a homemaker occasionally holding a part-time job). Because these parents are busy pursuing their careers and learning the ropes in a new society, they find it difficult to balance both the work and family worlds. They also feel pressured by the American culture to be “super,” as one participant explains.

Aleksey: The stereotype [in the U.S.] is that people need to be healthy, people need to be good-looking, and people need to be super, so that they can do lots of super things: work long hours, come back home, play with their kids, get up in the morning, and just get on with their lives.

However, for parents in the study, a lack of time continues to be an issue. They feel that they are failing to be “super” parents. Diana, a physician and a mother of two preschoolers, feels bad about not being able to take part in school activities for her children, and is worried that it may reflect badly on them. Because she and her husband are immigrants, and their children already may feel “different” to have parents speaking

with an accent, not volunteering in school adds more challenges at the age when being “different” is not desired by children. Ivana, a social worker whose mother is not able to come and help with two school-aged boys any more, notices a decline in the children’s academics and native language (described earlier in the “language” theme). She still makes considerable efforts to engage her sons in reading, drawing, cooking, sports, and learning Bulgarian language and culture. But more and more, she admits, they fall prey to television, computer games, and the entertainment culture while she and her husband are working outside of home to build a better life for their children.

Ivana: Our work doesn’t stop at the places where we work, we keep working here at home. [My husband] is looking for a job because [his contract ends]. And we have so many issues that nobody else can help us with, so we don’t have too much time for the kids. They spend so much time playing computer games and I think this is because we are so busy with our work.

Daniel, a father of two girls and a university professor, dislikes a lot of things that his daughters are being bombarded with by media on a daily basis but admits to not having time to deal with it. In general, for the majority of the participants, the influence of media and pop culture on the family life is immense, and a lack of time makes children vulnerable to its “destructive messages.” It is to this issue that we turn now.

Theme 6. Environmental Influences: “We Were Not Guided in Our Life That Much by Media and Television; We Got Our [Role] Models from the Family, Books”

The participants of the study grew up in a closed society, tightly controlled by the government. Communist morality prescribed citizens to put the collective interest above the personal interests and not to concern themselves with material possessions (Ispra & Elliott, 2003). Immigration to the United States involves a transition to living in a democratic state and a free market economy. While these parents embrace and welcome the freedoms and opportunities of their host environment, they are confronted with the

negative aspects of virtually unlimited freedom. The negative expressions include television and advertisement, and their influence on children. A quote from Daniel, father of two children, captures the problem.

Daniel: I don't like the pressure that comes from the media that is put out here. It is not controlled, and probably should not be controlled in a democracy or free state. But *everything here is about money*, making money, and being rich. They want everything to be commercial, just to over-commercialize all the aspects of life. And [what about] our children? You see, we did not grow up in this kind of environment where everything was for sale, to sell something and to make money, and the child grow up with the idea that this is fashionable, and this is what was shown on TV so I should buy that. Over-commercialism in all aspects of their life, selling, looking good, even if you don't look good, you have to [buy] because television [is] projecting into the kids' mind the idea that you should live [a certain way]. You see, we were not guided in our life by media and television. Mostly the way we lived, we got our models from the family, books. We read a lot of books, way, way, way more than [children now]. Literature, drama, everything. And we got our role models not from TV, from a show where every five minutes it breaks and sells you Pepsi, Coke, shoes, or whatever. I don't like it a lot! You might say, okay, you can avoid this in the society if you are smart. Well, you can probably unplug the TV, but the kids still go to school with other children, and they hear about these things, so you cannot [eliminate it]. If you live in this society you have to go with whatever they put on television, with whatever the kids get out from this media...

Indeed, the communist government had a tight grip on many aspects of its citizens' lives. For example, television programming was centrally controlled, and in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus there were only three channels. In Romania, the number of channels varied depending on the political situation: from two local channels and three channels transmitted from Russia at one time, to only two hours of television a day at another. Although a lot of propaganda was distributed through television, at the same time, excellent educational programs, cartoons, and movies were produced for children and shown for brief periods of times; and there was no advertisement at all. Because of the firm governmental control on mass media, one would never see acts of violence or sex on television. Contrasting that kind of environment with the one in the U.S., where an

entertainment industry is filled with “explicit sex, gratuitous violence, and aggressive materialism” and “rudeness, crudeness, and disrespect” (Hewlett & West, 1998, p. 153; see also Garbarino, 1995; Levin, 1998; Mack, 1997), may help to understand why immigrant parents feel that much of the programming on the U.S. television is “completely outrageous.”

Because of the factors described above, the problem of children and television was practically nonexistent at the time when the participants in the study were growing up in their home countries. Instead, book reading was strongly promoted by the state on all levels, and supported by schools and parents. In the former Soviet Union countries, for example, a quarter of all books published each year were for children, and they sold out immediately upon arrival to the bookstores (Pearson, 1990). Children read books by Soviet authors that “rank with the best children’s literature in the world,” as well as “many excellent works translated from the world’s treasure-house of books for young readers” (Pearson, 1990, p. 330). There was a frequently used expression to describe the world of imagination created through the children’s literature -- “the republic of childhood.” Landon Pearson (1990), an expert in child development who lived in the Soviet Union for a number of years and traveled the nation widely, calls such “culture of reading” as “one of the distinctive features of growing up in the Soviet Union” (p. 354). She writes that seven decades after the revolution in 1917, “the Soviet Union has become a ‘nation of readers,’ where illiteracy is not an issue” (Pearson, 1990, p. 364).

Knowing what kind of environment the parents in the study grew up in helps better understand their opinions about the way their children are growing up in the United States. It also allows us to gain insights into their perceptions of the environmental

challenges of a host country and worries about the exposure their children are getting from the “free” media: television, radio, computer games, Internet, video, and so on. It seems evident from the participants’ comments that they find it easier to be parents in their countries of origin than in the U.S., where parents have to be constantly aware and deliberate in preventing negative influences on their children. The controlled, child-friendly environment was characteristic of these former communist Eastern European countries, as evidenced by the following three narratives from mothers from Russia, Bulgaria, and Romania.

Lidiya: We try to bring up our children in the same spirit as we were brought up, but the problem is that it doesn’t quite work this way here. Among the values we were brought up on and now try to instill in our children are to read more, to watch less TV, and to read more books. So far [our daughter] seems to listen, but I am afraid that sooner or later the television and the computer will take over.

Diana: It is harder for us as parents coming from there to have our kids maintain our values. In Romania everybody is being put on the same rail and we all would go in the same direction, but here you have to watch your kids closely. It is easier to direct kids there than here, because here the exposure to [negative] things is greater.

Galina: We’ve lived similar lives because of the system and all that stuff. I think we can understand each other -- the communism and the way we were brought up, and the way the system worked. This is what we can understand and people here cannot because we have lived through that...

It is worth noting, however, that in their comparisons these parents talk about the situation in their countries of origin a generation earlier, when they were growing up (circa 1985 – 1995, considering that average age of the participants is 37 years old).

There is a possibility that what these parents discuss cannot be explained solely as “West vs. East”; generational differences should also be kept in mind. Indeed, the times have changed in the Eastern European countries now, and many parents and educators there lament the invasion of rampant capitalism with its competitiveness and focus on

individualism. Many current Eastern European scholars fault capitalism with its mass media, and mass culture for the “growth of immorality” and undermining of the “traditional value system” that created a “spiritual vacuum,” particularly among the younger people (Ispa & Elliott, 2003, p. 1387). Several parents in the study alluded to such “universal” processes, which they either observed personally or learned about from their friends and relatives in the countries of origin. Overall, however, it is a common tendency among the first-generation immigrants “to fixate on a specific social-cultural moment as a definition of their identity” (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998, p. 419) and define their native culture in terms of the norms, values, and social-political events prior to their immigration.

As mentioned earlier in the “time bind” theme, parents in the study are busy working to ensure a better life for their children in the United States. As discussed in the “grandparents” theme, there are no extended family and grandparents to help with child rearing. Thus, children of immigrants, just like children of many American parents, are left to the easily available babysitter: television.

Galina: I was much stricter at the beginning than I am now. Now I even allow him sometimes to watch TV when he eats, which I thought I wouldn't. And many times I let him watch TV because I have so many things to do. The TV is a baby sitter. I'm not proud of it, but it's happening more and more. Because we only have 24 hours a day and there are so many things you have to do, sometimes he tells me, “Let's go outside,” and I say, “Let's stay in and watch TV,” which is a shame, which I never thought I would do.

Similarly, Ivana feels that despite their efforts, her husband and she are slowly losing the battle. This situation brought them to a decision to simply unplug the television. However, that approach also leaves parents without an access to news, while children end up being occupied by the computer games.

Ivana: Something that we don't like in our family is watching television, and we tried our best. We are limiting the time when they are watching TV, but our little son is like a maniac: if he is watching one movie he cannot stop, so he has to watch TV constantly. So, it was our decision just to unplug the TV. And for a long period of time we were without TV. Now, from time to time, we put the TV on just to see the news. And, while we do this, we fail because they want to watch TV, and we just don't have the power to change it. So, right now our TV is unplugged. But there is another killer if I can say, this is the computer. Yes, of course, my older son reads books to my little son, and we let him play with the toys, but they are still small and their attention span is not very long, and it's so easy to get up on the computer and play the computer game and watch movies or clips on the computer when they are not able to watch the TV. So, it is difficult. When we have time on the weekend, we try to engage them in sports, we try to draw with them, and you saw some drawings here. I try to involve them with cooking a little bit sometimes when I have time and energy to do this. But it's difficult. We are dreaming to have a grandmother here to help us, but this is impossible.

Other parents in the study are more successful in dealing with the television problem for the time being. For example, because Ovidiu and Diana feel that total prohibition will not be effective, so they choose to closely monitor what television their children are watching in favor of educational and appropriate programs found on *Animal Planet* or *Discovery Channel*. Similarly, Tatiana and Oleg are managing to keep their children from heavy exposure to pop culture. They intentionally separate “real valuable contributions of American culture to the world culture” such as “Theodore Dreiser or Francis Ford Coppola” from the entertainment mass culture represented by “Michael Jackson or Britney Spears” and try to introduce their children to the former.

Tatiana: [In our family] we are not too much into mass culture. We don't watch TV at all, we are not involved with pop-culture too much. We are trying to limit [our daughter's] exposure to pop-culture. But I don't know whether it's because we are from Russia or because we are involved and concerned parents. There are very strict rules in our family regarding the exposure to TV and Internet, so she doesn't get to watch more than a couple of hours per week. Usually we prefer to rent movies, really good movies of this culture which we also like.

Overall, however, being far away from their extended family, and working long hours, parents in the study feel that the influence of the family world is diminishing while the powerful outside forces are taking over their children. Media and peers become a bigger authority than parents. Occasional visits from grandparents are not sufficient to help instill in children the values of the parents' native countries. With sadness, Lidiya and Vladimir from Russia share their story.

Lidiya: The society has a bigger influence than we do as parents because [our daughter] spends eight hours a day in an American society and only three hours with us. And in fact she doesn't believe us in many regards because *for her the authority is out there*. We are indeed parents who grew up not in this society and she feels that. And thus she calls into question our opinion sometimes. So far we are an authority perhaps, but soon I think... we will have to fight with that.

Vladimir: There is more influence of the outer world and less influence of the family world, our world.

Parental authority is decreasing among immigrant parents also because they do not really know what challenges to be prepared for in the future, because they did not grow up in the U. S. Not being familiar with the environment and not having "cultural" knowledge of the dangers available makes them worried.

Diana: The thing that I am afraid about here is that I didn't grow up in this society, I don't know what their exposure is, and what they are gonna do when they will go out. I don't know how real [the issues] of sex, drugs, etc. are and how easily you can be exposed to this. Our kids are in private schools. They are supposed to be good schools, but I don't know. If they will go to a party in a few years... I don't know.

In conclusion, sociocultural influences represent another big challenge for the immigrant parents in the study. Powerful pressures from the media and advertisers, unrestricted promotion of violent and sexual content, coupled with disparaging messages about the value of learning take precedence over the best interest of children and families in the United States, in the view of these parents. The immigrant parents in the study feel

particularly stressed about diminishing family influence, as well as the growing influence of the outside culture with its lack of positive role models, and disrespect for parents, teachers, and elders. They find it challenging to instill good morals in their children while living in a culture that is not supportive of parents. What these immigrants observe is in accord with what some American scholars point out: contemporary American culture has become antagonistic toward parents and families (Hewlett & West, 1998; Doherty, 2000; Garbarino, 1995; Levin, 1998; Mack, 1997).

Theme 7. Parenting Practices:
“As a Parent, You Have to Know How to Keep It in Balance”

This is a theme that combines many issues discussed by the participants. This theme is broken into three sub-themes: (1) discipline and authority, (2) self-esteem and confidence, and (3) freedom and independence.

Sub-theme 1. Discipline and Authority: “Oh, Please! You Need a Super Nanny to Tell You What to Do With Your Children?”

When asked about the differences and similarities of parenting practices between American parents and themselves, participants initially commented that there were not too many differences. They perceive parenting approaches used in the U.S. as not significantly different from the ones used in Eastern Europe. Showing a good example to your children if you want them to do something, trying to explain things, using time-out for discipline, and keeping the lines of communication open were mentioned by the parents. Overall, participants feel that American and European cultures are similar in this regard.

Upon further reflection, however, participants singled out some approaches to parenting that differ. The most fundamental was respect for parents, grandparents,

teachers, and all people who are older. Participants perceive that there is not enough emphasis in the U.S. on teaching children to be respectful.

Lidiya: [In the U.S.] children are allowed too much, [they] can be too rude to their parents. We try to bring up our children in the same spirit as we were brought up, but the problem is that it doesn't quite work this way here. For example, we try to instill in our daughter a respect to older people, but nevertheless she can answer to an older person, "Whatever," or some other words we would never in our life say to an older person. [...] there is a difference [in Russian language] when addressing a person, "vy" and "ty" makes a difference.³

In another family, parents of two boys, who have been living in the U.S. for over 12 years, believe that their sons got corrupted by the influence of American society and, despite their efforts, grew up disrespectful. Their 19-year old son talks back to teachers, the principal, managers at work, and many other adults in his life. These parents believe that punishment he gets from school does not have any effect and instead think there should be more emphasis on *teaching* children appropriate behavior. Further, they expect the state and schools to take on this function, a finding consistent with other studies of immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Galperin, 1988 as cited in Kovalcik, 1996; Kovalcik, 1996). Such expectation can be explained by the fact that in their native country of Belarus (as in the rest of the former communist countries), schools not only taught subject matter, but were also responsible for *vospitanie* of students, which is similar to "character education" or "upbringing." In his research of the "two worlds of childhood," Bronfenbrenner (1970) cited communist schools' responsibility for the moral development of students as "the most important difference between Soviet and American schools" (p. 26). Following immigration to the U.S., parents realize that there is a lack of support in this regard and that they are solely responsible for their children's upbringing.

³ There is no equivalent to this in English. In Russian language, "vy" is a formal plural pronoun used to address an older or more respected person; "ty" is an informal singular pronoun used to address a peer.

Olga: From day one, we were teaching our kids that they have to respect other adults and anybody who is older than them. You [are supposed to] respect teachers, not to mention your parents and your grandparents. Well, what they learned [in the U.S.] was that they can state their opinion in front of anybody and in any way they want to. And the challenge that we are facing right now is that [our son] talks back.

Other parents in the study similarly criticize American “relaxed” parenting approach that undermines parental authority. They make comparisons with the way children in their countries of origin are brought up, and advocate for stricter discipline. As the participants of the study see the problem, successful outcomes of parenting are possible when parents are involved, “in charge,” and firmer boundaries between parents and children exist. Below are two representative quotes from mothers who juxtapose a stricter parenting approach that they apply to their children versus a more lenient one they observe in the U.S.

Eva: My mother would look at me and I would know what [I did wrong]. Oh, please! You need a Super Nanny to tell you what to do with your children?! That’s a bad cultural American thing. I would say every culture has the same issues, this show Super Nanny came from England so they have the same problem, France has the same problems, but we are talking about my case. I’m sorry, but I’m the boss here, I got you and I’ll raise [you]. I will give my life for you, *but* you have to follow some rules, please. That’s our main job -- our son!

Diana: [In Romania] if a parent says something -- period. You do *not* comment. You do not talk back. If you do talk back, you are in bad shape. And [in the U.S.] the kids take you to court because a Mom dared to slap her child. I think that they are not helping the kids with this basically. They are trying to make kids more independent here, listen less to the parents. I think [Americans] are preoccupied a lot about the psychological aspect of their [kids`] life. Don’t punish your child because you are gonna hurt their self-esteem. Don’t spank the kids, etc. I’m not saying to spank the kids, but I think the discipline should be in place, the limits [in the U.S.] are a little bit loose.

As one of the mothers brought up a subject of physical punishment, it is important to note that some parents in the study view moderate physical punishment as an

acceptable method of discipline. Several participants said that spanking was applied to them and they benefited from it. Below is a dialog of one couple on the subject.

Dragomir: When I was young, 10-15 years old, I got some punishment from parents. But we were saying in case after you die you go to hell, all your body will burn, only the places on your body where your mother hit you will be safe from the flames. So, the point is...

Eva: Your mother will protect no matter what.

Dragomir: The point is even if your mother or father slap you, that doesn't mean that this is a child abuse, that's the way how you raise your kids. *You cannot get in the hell if your mother will beat you well.* Because that's the way she raises you, and leads you on the good way.

At this point his wife started to laugh because, despite this theoretical view of physical punishment, her husband, a highly involved father, never spanked their son.

In another family, where a mother at times feels like one of her children could use some "attitude adjustment," she nevertheless is reluctant to apply physical punishment. She admits to being afraid of her child reporting to teachers if he is spanked. Not being able to exercise one's authority or set limits in this way is something new that many immigrant parents learn upon arrival to the United States. Several parents in the study are worried that children do not really benefit from such protection in the U.S. In a society where a respect for parents and older people is not taught or supported on a large scale and parental authority is undermined, there is a danger, in the participants' view, that children will take advantage of the situation and "get completely out of hand."

Several parents speculated that maybe different approaches to spanking in their native countries and the U.S. stem not so much from the cultural differences but more from generational shifts in the methods of disciplining. They commented that previous generations of Americans spanked their children, which, in the participants' opinion, resulted in better behaved children. At the same time, many parents commented that a

much stricter approach to parenting used in Eastern European countries resulted in children who grew up “inhibited”, “shy”, “self-conscious.” Participants were critical of such practices in the countries of origin, and commented that they appreciate the advancements that American society has made towards the prevention of physical and emotional abuse of children.

Tatiana: The best [thing] I think is that [in the U.S.] there is no physical punishment, and heavy emotional punishment, I would say that parents do not yell at children. I think this is a very good achievement of this society which we need to learn and to practice in our families.

Although parents may have different parenting values, beliefs, goals, and practices, generally people from the same cultural background share tendencies in parenting (Greder & Allen, 2007). Certainly, in any country and culture, parental attitudes and behavior in families differ according to adults’ socioeconomic status, gender, age, personality, educational level, and occupational prestige, with more educated individuals often promoting curiosity and independence of thought rather than obedience in their children (Ispa & Elliott, 2003).

As in the discussion of earlier themes, parents again express their concern over a lack of familiarity with the challenges of growing up in the United States. They are worried that they do not have the knowledge and understanding of all the dangers ahead and, thus, will not be able to guide their children appropriately. For example, the issues of drugs, alcohol and sex are very troubling for immigrant parents, just like they are for American parents. The challenge for immigrant parents comes when their ideas about appropriate parenting techniques do not match those accepted in the United States. For instance, three parents of both genders from three different families and countries of origin discussed the problem of future underage drinking of their now young children.

These parents came up with a similar solution to prevent children from getting drunk and in trouble. However, their solution would be in direct conflict with the U.S. law. This is what Galina, a Bulgarian mother of a five-year-old, said.

Galina: I don't have to worry about it yet, but this will be certainly a concern: how to protect him from drinking. And I'm going to allow him to try beer if he wants to before 21, not to become obsessed with it. I don't agree with that [law of no beer before 21], I think it is damaging. One of the things that is crazy here and I haven't experienced it myself, but I hear it on TV, is that parents can get in trouble for the way they treat their children. Like if he tells his friends that I gave him a beer to drink, I may be in trouble, which is ridiculous. They may consider it a child abuse, sometimes the rules are applied in a very extreme way.

Dragomir, a Bosnian father of a 10-year-old, has the same idea of letting his son try alcohol at home under parental supervision. In his view, it is beneficial not to create a "forbidden fruit" out of alcohol, and it is acceptable to "occasionally take a sip of alcohol, but not to get drunk." Dragomir also spoke at length about having an open and honest conversations with his son about being involved sexually at an appropriate age and not getting "in trouble." In terms of teaching children generally, he commented:

[We all want] to teach kids how to go through the life in the safest way possible. But what is happening, some of those conversations can be taken like, I don't know, child abuse. [But] nobody can think better for my son than we with my wife will do. Nobody! I don't know what happens but that's a really bad thing that is happening over here, and I'm afraid that just because I'll try to teach my son what is the best for him, for his life, - somebody can take it as a "child abuse."

A theme, closely related to discipline, was that of self-esteem and assertiveness, characteristic of the American society.

Sub-theme 2. Self-Esteem and Confidence: "[In the U.S.], From a Very Early Age Children Gain Confidence and Develop Self-Esteem."

Parents in the study greatly appreciate the self-esteem and confidence that their children gain growing up in the American society. When the participants talked about the benefits of child rearing in the U.S., most of them praised the fact that growing up in the

U.S. allows their children develop their personality, and to gain confidence and assertiveness. These qualities were not emphasized at the time when these parents were growing up, and many of them feel they did not have opportunities to develop them as children. Growing up in a communist system, one's identity was defined through belonging to a collective, a group (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Pearson, 1990). In contrast, in a democratic state, the development of each person as a unique individual is more valued. Participants in the study shared their perceptions that one's individuality, self-esteem, and confidence are cherished in the American society, beginning in preschool and continuing into school, college, and later on in life, as the following comments demonstrate. For example, Galina, a mother from Bulgaria, is very happy to see her preschool aged son developing into a confident individual.

Galina: [I like that in the U.S.] children don't become too shy, [they] are not afraid. Whenever you ask them to sing, everybody says, I want to sing. Back home everybody is hiding, shy, and wants to be invisible. So, here kids are much more relaxed. They don't worry too much how they are gonna look in front of the others. And this is because from a very early age they gain confidence.

Similarly, Daniel, a father of two, criticizes the parenting approach typical of his native Romania for being too tough on children's self-esteem. He also gives credit to American society for facilitating children's self-expression and developing confidence. In his work as a professor at a university in the United States, he witnesses some mixed results of the American approach, and, comparing students in his native Romania to students in the United States, comments that "back home, they know more math, but they don't know social skills."

Daniel: [In the U.S.] they give them lessons on how to express themselves, how to be confident, and how to speak [in public]. It's a good bonus for the society, it's good to speak out. It doesn't mean that [students] are very well educated; it means that they have the courage to speak out. And sometimes they have no idea

what they are saying but [...] that's fine, and that's a positive. In my country, [...] if you have an opinion, you have to be careful how you say it; certainly there are more barriers to how you express yourself.

Several parents said that living in the United States made them realize that they themselves lacked assertiveness and self-esteem and that they did not value themselves as they should have. They attributed their own lack of confidence to the approach to child rearing practiced in their home countries and to “the way the [Communist] system worked” and influenced child development. Participants noted that although they had “wonderful parents,” it was the influence from the larger society that affected their upbringing. A reflective story from Diana, a physician from Romania and a mother of two, illustrates the power of simple children's songs and characters she learned about in the U. S., and what they made her realize about herself.

Diana: When we bought some tapes for our son when he was small, they looked to me kind of silly at first. But after watching them again and again, I realized that they are helping [children] to develop self-esteem. For example, Barney. I didn't like Barney at first, but it was good to hear a song where it tells you to show that you are happy. We came out inhibited from our culture because that's how it was home. But [Americans] have things I really like and I think they are good to some point. It does not have to be excessive...What's that song? If you are happy, clap your hands, let your face show it. And I said, nobody taught me this. I was coming here with [an attitude] of whether I was happy or not, my face looked the same, I was not expressing it. And even when I did something good, I did not feel like if I did something good I deserved anything. I was never proud of me because... I was not. And I think it is important for them to [hear those kinds of songs] because this is how you build your self-esteem. If you do something good then kiss your brain, like they say [laughter].

Vladimir, a university professor from Russia and a father of two children, similarly juxtaposed the approach to child-rearing practiced in a Communist system where one would always feel under “pressure” and “control” to the approach in a democratic society. He and his wife Lidiya are very pleased to see how their daughter Elena develops into a “confident leader” in the United States. They appreciate the

understanding demonstrated by Elena's teacher, despite the fact that their daughter actually was at fault in a certain situation.

Vladimir: I think it's good for children to be here in order to get this feeling of independence, self-confidence. Really, my daughter is a natural leader, and I'm sure she is enjoying these activities and they motivate them to do something. It is really a different system, because in our [communist] system you are under pressure all the time. You feel this pressure, control. Here you are on your own; you can develop your personality. And even if a teacher will not agree, she will correct the child in a respectful way. It's not like in Russia. I think it's pretty good for our children to be here, to get this.

Lidiya: I agree. That is why [Americans] are so self-confident. For example, Elena made trouble in school and the teacher told her in a strict tone of voice, "You should not do like this, and should do like that," and at the end she says, "Elena, I still love you, you are good, but you should to be better."

Vladimir: [A teacher] said, "We will not suppress a leader in her," [and we appreciate it].

When discussing such positive features of American upbringing as an emphasis on self-confidence and a freedom of expression in children, the participants extended the theme to future success in life. They perceive that assertiveness and "social and communication skills" are crucial for one's professional and financial success in an American society, and welcome many opportunities to "socialize" that their children are offered in the United States. Based on their own experience, these parents have learned how vital it is for one to not only be proficient in one's chosen career but also to be able to present oneself, to sell one's knowledge, and to mingle the way Americans do.

Ivana: We are trying to project on kids our desire for ourselves and for them to be more open and more social. In this country, I think it is very, very important. It's not [only] about what you know and how you perform at your job, it's [also] about how you communicate your success, how you present yourself, and how you socialize. So, this is the big difference between our country and the U.S. I found that it is *very* important, the social and communication skills. This affects the professional success also. If you are an introvert, if you are not so social, it will be a big problem.

Luben is an example of such introverted person that Ivana just described. Despite his doctoral degree and postdoctoral training, Luben does not consider himself a financial success. He attributes his troubles with finding a new job to the fact that he is much more comfortable with books than he is with people. Because of that, he admits to being unhappy seeing their son read many books (a contradiction to the values of his native culture, and a wife who tries her best to have their sons read books). Instead, Luben strongly encourages their sons to socialize, to participate in any social activities offered in school, “fundraisers” being one of them.

In sum, based on the perceptions of these parents, social and communication skills, assertiveness, and self-confidence are particularly valued and important skills in the new environment where these families now live. These immigrant parents welcome opportunities that support the development of their children’s self-esteem and confidence, and facilitate their successful adaptation to the United States.

Sub-theme 3. Freedom and Independence: “[There Is] So Much Freedom [in the U.S.] But You Have to Watch [How] Your Kids Use This Freedom.”

With self-confidence and assertiveness as positive and desired traits, we now turn to related, although less desired, features of growing up in the new environment of the U.S. -- freedom and independence. Freedom of decision-making by children was frequently mentioned by parents as a source of conflict. Based on the participants’ perception, in Eastern Europe parents have much more authority over deciding what is best for their children, compared to parents in the United States. Olga and Boris, parents from Belarus, shared their struggle with the transition to a new sociocultural environment, and the resulting difficulty in maintaining control of their two sons.

Olga: The downside of raising kids [in the U.S.] basically is that the first phrase they learn here is, “It’s a free country.” But what they fail to understand it’s a free country to a point. It’s not as free as they want to think it is.

Boris: They want to be free from anything, from responsibilities.

Olga: No responsibilities, no rules, no control from parents, I can do whatever I want to. But it’s not happening.

As discussed in the earlier themes, children’s education is a particularly important goal for these highly educated parents. Using the example of education, parents described their idea about the limits of freedom in decision making by children. Participants feel their primary parental responsibility is to “enforce learning” and pressure children, especially in such fundamental matters as education and preparation for the future. They believe that parents have to “constantly explain” and “guide” children towards investing in education, spending hours preparing homework, and the like. This is how Oleg, a father from Russia, answered a question about features of American parenting he would never accept in his family.

Oleg: I absolutely cannot accept the *freedom* the kids get here, especially at an early age when they don’t have any life experience. They are allowed to do whatever they want to, and parents usually are not supposed to guide them in an authoritarian way. But this is bad because parents want the best for their children, and their own experience [helps].

Similarly, Julia shared that, in her opinion, there is too much emphasis on “fun” in education, while “getting results” is not stressed enough. And thus children, from an early age, get used to expecting fun and play. The sense of entitlement and “accessibly of things at the snap of their fingers” may make it harder for children to put efforts into work and study. This is where parents have to do their job and “put some pressure” on children to guide them to where they feel their children need to be.

Tatiana: I would say that in Russia children get fewer opportunities to make their own decisions. At least, based on my observations of American kids. For example, many kids want to study music and then they realize that studying music

is difficult, you need to practice every day and you do not sit at the piano and suddenly start playing like a professional piano player. So, they get disappointed, and they say, okay, I quit music, I don't want to do it anymore. And I think sometimes it is useful to say, "No, you are not quitting it, you will do it for a while and we will see later." I see sometimes among American kids that they are too easily allowed to make such decisions. For example, I went to the music school in Russia and I wanted to quit several times, but my parents insisted on me to continue that education. And I am very grateful to them now that they did it, in a long run. It's a little thing but [it is telling].

This careful approach to children's independence and freedom in decision making comes from the parents' own upbringing. Both parents and professional educators in the former communist countries placed much emphasis on developing two very important traits in children: obedience and self-discipline (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). Obeying parents and other adults, and treating them with respect is not enough, however. A child is expected to internalize obedience and on this basis develop self-discipline. Only when these two traits are present in a child can he be allowed independence because "if a child does not obey and does not consider others, then his independence invariably takes ugly forms... and gives rise to anarchistic behavior" (Pechernikova, 1965/1970).

Although participants appreciate greater emphasis on the development of a unique personality of each child and cherishing his self-esteem, characteristic of American culture, they also have their reservations in this regard. It is the participants' perception that frequently children in the United States get too much praise that is "not deserved," and thus develop "inflated self-esteem" and self-centeredness. These parents share that they do not feel comfortable praising their children like American parents often do, based on their observations. One father said, "The truth is the Americans have become cheerleaders to their kids." Other participants commented that American parents often

apply “some fillers” that overstate actual accomplishments of a child, and thus lower the child’s motivation.

Julia: I think there is an adequate amount of praise that kids should get. And encouragement is good and necessary. However, I think Americans go overboard. It is part of the culture that all those things they are saying, “great” and “wonderful” -- they are overstatements. I think it triggers a wrong reaction and kids think better of what they have done, versus of what they should be, and in a sense it takes away their motivation.

While the participants of the study, like most parents around the world, want to encourage and motivate their children to succeed, they report being reluctant to resort to such trite comments as “Great!” and “Oh, such a good job!” Some explanation to this approach can found in Bronfenbrenner’s (1970) research on the former Soviet society, where he describes that “if a child is already doing well in school and following the rules of conduct, he should *not* be praised for it” (p. 12). The encouragement and praise are employed only when a child goes above and beyond expectations “to correct faults of character” (Pechernikova, 1965/1970). Knowing some of this background information may help better understand parenting practices of immigrant families from the former communist countries.

Participants, however, do not view an authoritarian parenting style as the best. Having been exposed to a new culture, they compare pros and cons of being “too strict” with children, as in their countries of origin, versus being “too relaxed,” as they perceive parenting in the United States. Similar to discussions of other issues, participants are equally critical of extremes they find in both cultures. They spoke about the need to find a balance between giving one’s child unlimited freedom without structure or boundaries, versus being authoritarian, harsh, and demanding obedience. As in many issues, the solution often involves a compromise, a middle-ground orientation also found in studies

with immigrants' parents from India (Patel et al., 1996; Pettys & Balgopal, 1998). Both mothers and fathers spoke about a need for balance between keeping their children motivated and, at the same time, grounded in reality.

Diana: As a parent you have to know how to keep it *in balance*. Don't make them feel like they are the center of the Universe, and they are SO great. It's important [to keep it in balance].

Ovidiu: Yes, tell them when they are bad and tell them when they are good.

In sum, throughout the interviews, participants assessed critically the extremes in parenting issues they observed both in the U.S. and in their countries of origin. They find that a balanced compromise is the best answer to the questions of discipline, freedom, self-esteem, and independence. The following comments from a couple from Romania show how living in the United States positively influenced them as parents, and sums up the approach taken by many parents to negotiate two cultures and their two realities.

Diana: I think overall [the influence of American culture] is a good one. What I think it is good here is that you can be yourself, you are appreciated the way you are, you don't have to [change]. I think somehow at home [in Romania] it was a little bit too strict, and we came out kind of shy and inhibited. Here *if* you know how to keep the balance, you can lead children to great things.

Ovidiu: It liberated us to do what is good to do. So if you look at the things here, and back home, you can pick and choose the best parts regarding the parenting and discipline, and then have a freedom to combine those. It is a beneficial influence.

This quote is representative of the approach that these immigrant parents take in their overall adaptation to life in the U.S., and it concludes the discussion of seven themes. In the next chapter, I will summarize significant findings of the study, relate them to the existent immigrant literature, and offer implications for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the following topics will be discussed: (1) contributions of the study to the field of immigrant research, (2) limitations of the method selected, (3) summary and significance of findings, and (4) implications of the findings for practice and future research.

Contributions of the Study

This study was a qualitative examination of the parenting experiences of the first-generation immigrant professionals from Eastern Europe. There are several important contributions that this research makes to the literature on immigrants. First, it examines the experiences of highly skilled professionals, while most previous studies look at low-income immigrants, refugees, or manual laborers. Second, it spotlights a less visible population, immigrants from Eastern Europe, whereas the majority of recent studies examine immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Third, it focuses on families and utilizes families as the unit of analysis, as opposed to focusing on individuals. Fourth, it offers some *why* and *how* explanations to questions left unanswered by large-scale quantitative studies. Fifth, it uses qualitative methodology that gives *a voice* to the participants and illustrates the *processes* of adapting to life in the U.S. by foreign-born parents and their children.

The purpose of the study was to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of parenting children in a new sociocultural context, and its *meaning* to the participants. A qualitative methodology was particularly well suited for this exploratory, process-oriented research, as it allowed asking participants open-ended questions about their adaptation experiences and the meanings they make of them. Such methodology

was invaluable in studying immigrants in the context of their social environment, from their perspective, to allow them to portray with richness and texture their lived experience of immigration and parenting.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this qualitative method is that it does not allow for generalizations and predictions of outcomes, because it is not based on a random or representative sample. The findings of the study may not necessarily be transferred to the population of immigrant families from Eastern European countries living in the United States. Just as any immigrant group, Eastern Europeans differ in their countries of origin with their different languages, cultures and histories; educational level, social class, and socioeconomic and urban/rural background; factors surrounding immigration, and the levels of acculturation. The participants of the current study belong to the middle- and upper-middle class, and thus their experience may not reflect the reality of lower-income immigrant groups who struggle for economic security.

In addition, the findings of this study may not have universal applicability to diverse family structures (e.g., single-parent, step-families) or to families with different availability of resources (e.g., ethnic communities, social supports, work conditions). However, the findings presented in this research can be used as aids in understanding some of the aspects of immigrant parenting by the group of immigrant professionals from Eastern Europe.

Summary of Significant Findings

Generally, the results of this study are congruent with the literature on immigration and parenting; but they also add further ideas and factors to consider, as will

be described further. In addition, participants' narratives provide deeper and more textured pictures of the processes occurring in the families of immigrants and give us valuable descriptions of the *meanings* of certain events to them, answers to *why* and *how* questions, that allow us to go beyond correlations.

Three of the themes presented, native language, ethnic identity, and grandparents, are closely interrelated. Language is a key element of one's ethnic identity; it also has a great meaning for immigrant parents as the only means of communication between second-generation immigrant children and grandparents. It is particularly important for immigrant parents to preserve native language among their children to prevent future generational and cultural disconnect. The literature suggests that the chances for additive language acquisition and fluent bilingualism are much higher among the children of higher-status immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Rumbaut & Ima, 1998). The data of this study indicate that it depends on several other factors. The availability of language-maintenance supports in the form of ethnic communities, schools, contact with the grandparents, extended family, and ethnic friends all make a difference and facilitate *selective acculturation*, when native language and culture are partially retained by parents and children (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Thus, a minority of the parents in the study are more successful than others in maintaining native language and connection to ethnic heritage in their children.

Consonant acculturation, most commonly associated with immigrant professionals who rapidly integrate into the mainstream institutions, is the case when both parents and children abandon their native language and culture at the same pace (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). However, I am reluctant to classify families from my study as

examples of consonant acculturation, simply because many of the children were born in the U.S. and did not have the same level of language and cultural knowledge as their parents, to begin with.

However, in addition to helping with categorizing, parents' narratives humanize dry statistical facts and paint a personal picture of the *meaning* of some losses. Supplementing the finding that "by age 18, second generation bilingualism is exceptional" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 143) with a mother's words, "*He answers in English, and this breaks my heart,*" or a father's words, "*I'm afraid that we lost her,*" may help practitioners better understand the anguish of an immigrant parent from any country whose child grows up to be English monolingual. Family life educators may find the narratives shared by the participants to be effective teaching tools with various audiences, to help understand how immigrants' native language and ethnic identity dissipate through time and over generations, and what it means to them.

Despite years of living in the United States, the participating first-generation immigrants still report feeling attached to "our old world," feeling "conflicted," and living "between two worlds." Consistent with immigrant literature, parents in the study do continue to look at their life in the U.S. through the dual-frame of reference, often comparing contexts of living in the U.S. with those of their countries of origin (Falicov, 2003; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Wakil et al., 1981). Participants' narratives illustrate how they follow American ways in a larger community and behave according to American values of independence, assertiveness, and achievement. At the same time, they do not fully relinquish their native ways of family interactions, and continue practicing collectivistic values of family cohesion, interdependence, and

interpersonal relationships in their private lives. These participants, similar to immigrants in other studies, seem to be searching for a middle-ground solution that would incorporate the collectivism of Eastern Europe and the individualism of the U.S. (Patel et al., 1996; Pettys & Balgopal, 1998).

Depending on the individual's personality and family circumstances, many of the immigrants learn to live in an ambiguous situation and make the best of living "in two worlds" (Falicov, 2002/2003). Advancements in modern means of communication and growing globalization are instrumental in this regard, and distinguish modern immigrants from the ones a century ago, when immigration meant not seeing your loved ones any more and departures to the U.S. were viewed as funerals (Boss, 1999). Regarding the ethnic identity of the participants' children, the short answers included: "They *are* American" and "Our kids are more American than anything." A longer response to this question would involve future studies with the children themselves, all of whom at one point or another have to find their own answer to this question.

In terms of biculturalism, these parents are appreciative of the U.S. policy of multiculturalism and are able to embrace and profit from membership in two cultures. A common strategy used by the participants of the present study is to negotiate their past and their present and look for the best parenting practices, regardless of what culture they come from. For instance, when discussing issues related to parenting and child-rearing, participants were equally critical of the extremes they find in both cultures, American and Eastern European. The participants of this study view the opportunities that their children have to develop their personality and gain confidence as a highly beneficial aspect of growing up in the U.S. They encourage their children to develop such characteristics as

assertiveness, self-esteem, public speaking, and presentation skills, viewing those as essential for their children's success in the United States. A similar strategy was found to be used by Indian immigrant parents (Patel et al., 1996; Pettys & Balgopal, 1998). At the same time, bicultural parents retain many attitudinal linkages with their original culture that, they believe, keep them and their children "grounded in reality." They are careful in the way they praise their children in order to avoid "inflated self-esteem" and decreased motivation in their children. The narratives presented in the current study illustrate the process of *how* bicultural parents and their families may experience what some scholars called "the healthiest adjustments to the multicultural context of their lives" (Greder & Allen, 2007, p. 126).

Thus, a common theme that emerged across the interviews was that of a "balance." Parents are adapting to a new environment by looking for middle ground in the issues of discipline, independence, and freedom, as well as collectivistic and individualistic orientations. As with many issues, a solution often involves a compromise between preserving native culture and adapting to the host culture, and such behavior is an example of the *integration* pattern of acculturation (Berry, 2001). The current study agrees with previous studies that view biculturalism as an asset for people living in a diverse society (Allen & Connor, 1997; Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980).

The theme of education emerged as the most salient from the data analysis, although only one interview question addressed education. Participants were told that researchers found a connection between longer residence in the U.S. and declining academic achievements and aspirations among children of immigrants, and were then

asked, “*Why do you think that happens?*” At least six out of eight themes, either directly or indirectly, provide possible answers to the phenomenon of dissipation of human and social capital over time. The participants of the current study may be in a particularly good position to answer the question posed. These individuals, who are university professors, physicians, engineers, and managers, highly value education and have high expectations for achievement for their children. In addition, they obtained a solid education in their countries of origin that enabled them to both enter graduate schools in the U.S. and be hired by U.S. companies. Their continued experience with education in the U.S. and subsequent exposure to the educational system in the role of university professors (12 of the 24 participants), as well as concerned parents, allows ample ground for observation and opinion.

Previous research on the decline of academic achievements and aspirations among the children of immigrants focused primarily on the experiences of Latino and Asian immigrants, mostly of low socioeconomic status. In the current research, with a group of immigrant professionals from Eastern Europe, I found confirmation of some of the preceding findings with other immigrant groups that can partially explain the erosion of immigrant human and social capital, and will present them first. After that, I will offer some previously unconsidered factors that may help explain the decline of academic achievements and aspirations among the children of immigrants.

Consistent with Gibson’s (1997) study of the families from the Caribbean, current research finds that for the group of immigrant professionals from Eastern Europe, the following factors played a role. Those factors are: (1) weakened ties between parents and children and increased isolation of a nuclear family from extended family and

grandparents; (2) time bind and decreased parental involvement due to long working hours; and (3) an erosion of parental authority due to differences between American norms regarding discipline and Eastern European parenting practices. Among other possible factors, identified by previous studies, to explain the erosion of immigrant students' human capital were racial discrimination, poor quality inner-city schools, and lack of parental financial resources (Waters, 1997). The sample of the present work allows, speaking in quantitative language, "to control" for such variables as race, parental finances, and the quality of schools children attend. Having looked at the data from racially white individuals from middle- and upper-middle class families with a certain level of financial resources, I propose to consider the following factors: familial, school, and societal influences on children' academic outcomes.

On the family level, certain parenting values, resources, and practices play a role, based on the data from this study and consistent with existing literature. These values include strong orientation to achievement, high aspirations, emphasis on the value of education, hard work, and what has been termed "immigrant optimism" about children's future (Caplan et al., 1991; Gibson, 1988/1990; Kao, 1995; Kao & Tienda, 1995). Children are influenced by their parents' attitudes and cultural values. Desired parenting practices include limited television viewing, insisting on daily homework, study sessions, and reading, findings consistent with previous research with academically successful Southeast Asian refugees and Punjabi Sikh youth. These factors help partially explain why initially children of immigrants academically outperform their native-born counterparts (Caplan et al., 1991; Gibson, 1988/1990; Kao & Tienda, 1995). Children of immigrant professionals also have additional parental resources: (1) parental educational

and English language resources to get help with the homework and (2) parental financial resources to ensure the best schools, tutors, and learning environment are available. Thus, children of immigrants in the current study are at an advantage in having many conditions to succeed academically (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

On the school level, however, based on the perceptions of these highly-educated parents, the primary and secondary educational system in the U.S. does not provide a challenging enough curricula, lacks homework assignments, and, importantly, does not take responsibility for the character education of its students. Comparing school preparation they received in Eastern Europe to that of their children in the U.S., participants lament the underutilized potential of children and use words such as “worried,” “concerned,” and even “scared” to describe their feelings about their children’s education. Participants report being extremely dissatisfied with schools’ relaxed standards, the emphasis on “fun” instead of hard work, “superficial” requirements, and weak curricula, especially in the hard sciences and mathematics. Ensuring good quality education for their children is one of the most profound stressors of immigration, as reported by the participants in the study. These findings are consistent with studies of highly educated Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Kovalcik, 1996) and Chinese parents from various educational backgrounds (Wang, & Gilbert, 2005). Even though the current study was not designed to analyze the quality of education in American schools, the findings that emerged from the outsiders’ views about the educational system in the U.S. may be of interest to parents, educators, and policy makers.

On the sociocultural level, participants of the study report that broader society and culture are sending to children messages that undermine their children's motivation to study. They believe that education is not valued enough in the U.S., and that the emphasis is wrongly placed on material possessions and financial success. Just like many American working parents who are caught up in a time bind (Hochschild, 1997), immigrant parents in the study are struggling to balance work and family life. For many of the immigrants' children, a void, resulting from parental long working hours and a lack of social supports, gets filled with influences from the mass media and pop culture. The principle of "consumer sovereignty" and free enterprise, coupled with a lack of proper regulation, reportedly made the entertainment industry in the U.S. a counterproductive force in the lives of children, and creates an additional burden for the parents (see also, Hewlett & West, 1998; Doherty, 2000; Doherty & Carlson, 2002; Garbarino, 1995; Levin, 1998; Mack, 1997). Not being closely familiar with a host country's environment and missing the support of grandparents and the greater society in child rearing creates extra challenges for immigrant parents in this regard. They make considerable efforts to engage their children in activities to promote reading and learning. However, more and more, they admit, children fall prey to television, computer games, and the entertainment culture while immigrant parents work to build a better life for their children.

In the following section, I discuss the implications of the significant findings from this study. As a concluding note, there were no apparent gender differences in the participants' responses. Husbands and wives were typically in accord in their answers to the interview questions and in how they described their parenting experiences and expectations for children.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

There are many lessons that can be learned from the participants' narratives. The length of this work does not permit to elaborate on all valuable messages; in addition, they might differ for each individual, at a different stage in life, and be found on different levels of depth not evident to me at this time. Below are brief, and by no means, comprehensive, implications of this study for practitioners, parents and suggestions for future research.

Implications for Practice

When considering issues of parenting among immigrant populations, it is extremely important to be cognizant of the influence of ethnicity and culture on the dynamics in the family. The values of the host culture, be it American, Canadian, or European, should not be used exclusively as a frame of reference to understand the processes occurring in immigrant families. Therapists, social workers, and other practitioners working with immigrants from Eastern Europe should be aware that many of the family practices are culturally-based and should not be judged by mainstream American standards or labeled as non-normative (McGoldrick, 2003).

According to the findings of the study and consistent with the extant literature, "the family" for Eastern Europeans constitutes a large network that includes grandparents and extended family members (Robila, 2004), most often residing in the countries of origin. Thus, in their definition of "the family," immigrants from Eastern Europe are more similar to other populations that value extended family ties and three-generational families. For example, the importance of extended family for African Americans (Taylor, Robert, & Chatters, 1997) and for immigrants (Falicov, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001)

has been well documented. It has to be acknowledged that Eastern European immigrants are closer to the abovementioned groups than to White Americans, with whom they may be often grouped due to a shared skin color.

In addition, mental health professionals should be aware of the existence of such a family that is more often physically absent, but psychologically present in the minds and hearts of many immigrants, thus representing an “ambiguous loss” (Boss, 1999). At the same time, practitioners should be aware of the frequent exchange of lengthy visits from the grandparents and visits of children to the parents’ country of origin in many immigrant families. Viewed through a cultural lens, such active involvement of grandparents in the upbringing of grandchildren is not a sign of dysfunction, but, rather, a normative family practice for these families. Also, family-centered therapy is suggested to be more effective with immigrants than a traditional Western individual-focused therapy (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994; Baptiste, 1993; Pinderhughes, 1995).

Practitioners should remember that immigrant parenting is greatly affected by the stressors of cultural transition. Immigrant families have to cope not only with a generation gap between parent and child but also with a cultural gap as well. Practitioners need multicultural knowledge to understand conflicts within an immigrant family system and parents’ views on physical punishment, alcohol use, discipline, and other issues. In terms of education, teachers and school administrators may benefit from having some background knowledge about different immigrant groups in order to understand why an immigrant parent may ask teachers to challenge his child more academically, or expect character education be primarily a school’s responsibility.

Overall, in the global economy of today, the importance of education will continue to increase as a means of upward mobility, and the most up-to-date technical and professional education will become an ever greater job prerequisite (Gans, 1992). Moreover, global changes point to the process that has been termed the “flattening of the world,” in which many jobs are outsourced from the United States “to smart and hungry” Indians, Chinese, and Asians (Friedman, 2005). It may be wise for American educators to examine what factors are responsible for producing great academic results for students in other countries and implement the best practices for the benefit of all American students.

Parents who are concerned about the future of their children have to recognize that times have changed, and they need to ensure that their children are prepared to compete in the world economy. Cross-cultural studies and research with “outsiders” may contain valuable lessons regarding parenting practices and values that positively influence students’ academic outcomes. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Thomas Friedman, in his national bestseller book *The World is Flat*, states, “When I was growing up, my parents used to say to me, ‘Tom, finish your dinner – people in China and India are starving.’ My advice to you is: [Children], finish your homework – people in China and India are starving for your jobs” (p. 237).

As a culture, we all need to reconsider what messages are being sent to our children about education, financial success, life priorities and values. Again, in the words of Friedman (2005), “In China today, Bill Gates is Britney Spears. In America today, Britney Spears is Britney Spears – and that is our problem” (p. 265).

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this research provide some explanations for phenomenon of parenting in immigration and suggest potential directions for future research. Narratives and themes that emerged in the present study may be used for comparative purposes when studying other immigrant groups. It has been pointed out that “culturally diverse families share more commonalities with families at their same socioeconomic level than with whom they are grouped due to race or ethnicity” (Sherif Trask & Hamon, 2007, p. 280). The understudied population of immigrant professionals should be the subject of further studies, with attention paid to immigrant professionals from different countries to identify commonalities and differences of their parenting experiences with those of immigrant professionals from Eastern European countries.

In terms of the sample for future studies, I would make two suggestions. First, in the current study, several participants had children born while still living in their countries of origin, while other participants transitioned to parenthood for the first time in the U.S. Thus, the former group had actual parenting experiences to compare with their current situation in the U.S., while the latter group made hypothetical comparisons or comparisons based on their upbringing a generation earlier. While there were no key differences between the experiences of these two groups of parents, I would suggest that future studies select a more homogeneous sample in this regard to ensure the clarity of the findings. Second, I would recommend selecting one particular age group for the children of immigrants: for example, preschoolers, fourth grade students, or high school students. Focusing on one specific age group would allow studying the experiences of immigrant parents and the children of immigrants more in depth. The realization of these

two sample-related suggestions will, of course, depend on the accessibility to potential participants and/or research funds available to conduct the study. For the current study to be realized, I chose to be less selective about the participants. However, when possible, the above sample criteria should be considered.

Another future direction for research would be to interview the children of the participants to get their side of the story. How do they define themselves in terms of their ethnic identity? How important for them is to have a relationship with their grandparents? What do their ethnic heritage and language (and the loss of those) mean to them? Would they, like their parents do, also consider their education in the U.S. as “not challenging enough”? What careers do they want to go into, based on what they see in their parents’ lives? These are just a few of the possible questions to explore in future studies.

In terms of the methodology of the further research, I would like to join those scholars who advocate for postpositivistic thinking that helps explain the complexity and the meaning of human behavior, particularly of culturally diverse families (Sherif Trask & Marotz-Baden, 2007; Slife & Williams, 1995; Boss, 2002). Qualitative research methods allow us to focus on the *processes* of the families’ adaptations to the larger sociocultural environment and the *choices* they make. Gaining greater understanding of culturally diverse families will allow family scientists to create programs and interventions that would better suit the needs of the culturally diverse families (Sherif Trask & Marotz-Baden, 2007; McGoldrick, 2003).

In conclusion, narratives are the stories people tell about their own experiences and the meanings they attach to those stories (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1996). I conducted these interviews in the spirit of being a student of my participants, and I have

learned a great deal. It is my hope that these stories will serve as “teaching mirrors” for any reader of this work, and, as each person comes to a story from her own perspective, she will take from the story a unique message. A Hasidic proverb says, “Give people a fact or an idea and you enlighten their minds; tell them a story and you touch their souls” (Chinen, 1992, in Dollahite et al., 1996). It is my humble hope that this study will inform the reader’s mind as well as touch her soul.

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APPENDIX A. RECRUITMENT LETTERS

July 25, 2005

Smiley Anders, Advocate columnist

“Olena Nesteruk, a Ph.D. candidate in LSU's School of Human Ecology, wants to interview for her dissertation ‘immigrants with children from Eastern Europe who are currently living in the Baton Rouge area, and have been in the U.S. for more than four years.’ Call (225) 247-1594 or e-mail onestel@lsu.edu.”

Dear Mr./Ms.

I am a PhD candidate at the LSU's School of Human Ecology writing my dissertation on the experiences of immigrant parents from Eastern Europe now living in the U.S. Specifically, the study will look at the impact of immigration and living in a new culture on parenting processes in these families, and what can be learned from their experiences.

I am looking for married couples who would be willing to participate in the study, which would include a 60 minute interview at the participants' convenience.

Criteria for participation include:

- Immigrants from Eastern Europe
- You do NOT have to be U.S. citizens (can be students on J and F type visas, or workers on H1B visas, or Green Card holders)
- Minimum of 4 years of residency in the U.S.
- Married, with children

All names and other identifying information about the participants will be kept confidential. If you or anyone you know would like to participate, please contact me either at (225) 247-1594 or onestel@lsu.edu. The study is currently under way, so please call or write now!

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

Olena

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APPENDIX B. STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the study, “Immigration and parenting: A qualitative exploration of the experiences of European immigrants in the U.S.,” is to examine the lives of the families who came to the United States from European countries. Specifically, the study will look at the impact of immigration and living in a new culture on parenting processes in these families, and what can be learned from their experiences.

Rights of Participation

The interview should last approximately 60 to 90 minutes; it will take place in your home, or any public place of your choosing. All your responses will be held anonymous. Your name will not be in any way associated with the data. Eventually, there might be publications based on the results of this study, but they will not contain any identifying information. Your participation is completely voluntary; you may stop participating at any time, you may also choose not to answer questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

This interview will be recorded so as to produce the highest-quality data and to eliminate the possibility that I will quote you inaccurately. The tape recordings will be transcribed for analysis, and the records will be destroyed after all the data have been published.

Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks for participating in this study. However, this research will help family scholars and professionals better understand the lives of the families who came to the U.S. from other cultures.

Participation Assurance and Contacts

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I have read the above statement and give my consent to participate in this interview on tape. The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. If I have any questions or concerns about this research, I can contact Olena Nesteruk at onestel@lsu.edu or (225) 247-1594, or her dissertation advisor Dr. Loren Marks at lorenm@lsu.edu. I agree to participate in the study described above.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name: _____

Age: _____ Circle one: Male Female

Country of origin: _____ Faith affiliation: _____

Education (High School, College, etc.) _____

If you got your degree from a U.S. university, which one(s)? _____

Occupation: _____

How long have you been living in the U.S.? _____ years

What states have you lived in? _____

For how long have you been married? _____ years

Child(ren's) Gender and Age(s): _____

What is your combined family income (please circle one):

Under \$10,000

\$10,001 – \$20,000

\$20,001 – \$40,000

\$40,001 - \$60,000

\$60,001 - \$80,000

\$80,001 - \$100,000

Over \$100,000

APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were your reasons for immigrating to the U.S.?
2. How do you think your family changed as a result of immigration to the U.S.?
(Follow-up: What would you say your family lost and gained as a result of the immigration?)
3. What are your goals for your child/ren? Do you think your goals for your children would differ if you had stayed in your native country? If so, how?
4. What are the benefits of having your children grow up in this country?
5. On the downside, what are the challenges of having your children grow up in the U.S.?
6. What are the greatest challenges you face as a parent in this country? (Follow-up: What adjustments do you think you had to make as a parent in the US?)
7. Could you please describe for me what you consider a typical/mainstream American family?
8. If you would compare the image of a “good mother” and a “good father” in your native country to those in the U.S. (e.g., responsibilities, roles, qualities), how would they differ?
9. Conflicts between generations are inevitable regardless of what country one lives in. How would you compare intergenerational conflicts with your children to the ones you had with your parents?
10. Are there any traditions from your native culture that you find beneficial for your parenting? How do they help?
11. Do you think that you or your family had to give up any of your cultural beliefs/traditions/values to adapt to the American society? If so, what are they?
12. How would you say “American culture” influences your family? (If applicable based on the answer - How do you resist negative influences?)
13. What features of “American parenting” do you find beneficial to children and families? Which of them you accept readily?
14. What aspects of “American parenting” would you never accept, and why?

15. Researchers have found that longer residence in the U.S. and second-generation status (being born in the U.S.) are connected with declining academic achievement & aspirations among children. Why do you think that happens?
16. What language do you speak at home? How important is it to you to have your children know your native language?
17. Would you like your child(ren) to marry an American or somebody from your own culture? Why or why not?
18. Some researchers indicate that being bicultural is conflicting – being torn between two worlds. Others say that having a membership in two worlds is beneficial. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having two cultures/ two languages for your children / you / your family as a whole?
19. Have you ever thought of going back to your native country?
20. Is there is anything else that you would like to add or take back? Is there anything I didn't ask you about but you think is important to the understanding of parenting by European immigrants in American culture?

VITA

Olena Nesteruk was born in Kiev, Ukraine. She is the daughter of Vasyl and Tatiana Nesteruk. She is married to Ovidiu Chiparus, and has a two-year-old daughter, Katherine Sophia.

In 2000, Olena graduated from the National Agricultural University of Ukraine with a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics degree. She earned her Master of Science degree in human ecology from Louisiana State University in 2003. She will graduate from Louisiana State University in May 2007 with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in human ecology.

Olena is a member of the National Council on Family Relations. While working toward her graduate degree at Louisiana State University, Olena worked for five years as a graduate assistant in the School of Human Ecology.