

Broken Dreams in “Land of Gold and Honey”?

The case of cross-cultural marriages of Ukrainian women in Norway

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Abstract

The main purpose of this thesis is to investigate “What are the crucial factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway?”

This is a qualitative, case-study research, based on the method of Narrative Inquiry.

The fairy tale of Cinderella who waits for her charming prince is still the most popular story among the majority of women in Ukraine. Contemporary Ukrainian reality cannot satisfy their dreams. On the other hand, the Western World since the Soviet times and the “iron curtain” was perceived as a land of Eldorado. Many Ukrainian women left their country in search of “Eldorado”, where they hoped to find not gold but their prince charming. One of those destinations has been Norway. Some came as workers, some as students, and many came here as wives. The dream for a beautiful life and a charming prince was a major motivation to seek husband abroad. The easiest way to achieve their dream was to utilize on-line matchmaking agencies.

This thesis presents the stories of eight women in cross-cultural families, where the husbands are Norwegians and the wives are coming from Ukraine.

I will discuss conditions which prevent or stimulate their personal development; the differences in their experiences; specific challenges during their integration and challenges in cross-cultural communication and how the family relations influences women’s self-esteem.

There are three main findings in this thesis. First, there are two crucial factors make an impact on their self-realization. Second, there are three types of adaptation to Norwegian family life and society, and each type corresponds to how they met their husband and Norwegian society. Third, women who met their future husbands through the internet would experience different scenarios in their relationships, compared to those who met them in person.

Keywords: *Ukrainian women, gender, integration, identity, conflicts*

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1. Introduction

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. It knows no geographical or cultural limits, or economic position. As long as it continues, we cannot say that we have actually made progress towards equality, development and peace.”

Kofi Annan¹

Gender equality became an outstanding issue of the 20th-century and is continuing to be a controversial discussion topic into the 21st century. During the last decades, governments and various agencies prioritised gender issues in development, planning and policies. Gender policies promote the empowerment of women in all spheres, including family and community life and encourage them to contribute to society.

Population movements and intercultural marriages have become common feature in a globalized world. Thus, it is natural that many scholars have tried to depict the specific experiences of women.

Nowadays, there are many debates focused on gender issues in Norwegian media. The critical area of concern is the gender roles and issues of security in immigrant families.

Ukrainian women appeared to be an interest group for this master thesis. I focused my research on cross-cultural families, where the husbands are Norwegians and wives are coming from Ukraine. Much research has been done on cases of inter-cultural families; yet, Norwegian-Ukrainian families were not investigated much. The topic of my concern is problems and challenges of Ukrainian women in Norway.

In this work, I will discuss the specific challenges that Ukrainian women faced after they were married to Norwegians and arrived in Norway. For many of them, their expectations were not fulfilled. They experienced discrimination, disrespect and violence, all of which affected their well-being.

I will discuss examples of happy and unhappy marriages, with focus on self-realization based on how women defined this notion, successful integration and career opportunities.

¹<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/session/presskit/fs4.htm>

2. Structure of the Thesis

This master thesis is divided in six chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction.

The second chapter demonstrates the structure of this work.

Chapter three is the methodological approach. Here, I will describe the problem of the thesis and will talk about the main aspects which will guide my research. After that, I will explain my interest to the subject of this research, its relevance to Peace studies, how I selected informants and how I conducted the interviews. Further, I will discuss the field experiences, will talk about the importance of the ethic and in conclusion will refer to the subject of the interviews.

The fourth chapter is the theoretical outline. Here, I will present the theory of identity, Western feminist theory, marriage theory, social exchange theory, migration theory and integration. I found these theories as the most relevant because they can explain the “world” of Ukrainian women and their realities in the best way.

The fifth chapter is the discussion part. In this chapter, I will analyze and process the data of interviews in order to answer the main question of my research “What are the crucial factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway?” In order to do this, I will present the women’s stories. The focus will be on the similarities and differences in their narratives, on how they met their future husbands, what their expectations were from new life, relations with husbands, problems they encountered and how they adjusted themselves to the new environment. I will support my analyses with relevant theory, my own reflections and women’s interviews.

The finale of this work will be a conclusion. Here, I will summarize the whole work, will tell about my findings and will propose possible issues for the prospective research.

3. Methodological Approach

3.1. Problem of the thesis

“What are the crucial factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway?”

Here, the central theme will be the self-realization of Ukrainian women.

According to Abraham Maslow, the self-realization or self-actualization, as he called it, is on the apex of the pyramid of the human needs, following self-esteem, love and belonging, need for security and physiological levels at the bottom. In order to be able to reach the top level, all previous ones should be achieved. Maslow argued that the need for self-actualization comes when a person overcomes basic needs and reaches the full potential. On this level, an individual is free from prejudices, is not afraid of unknown, and focuses on personal image and self-confidence (Lowry; College 1999).

Nevertheless, my respondents will define the notion of self-realization due to their personal understanding and will explain what the self-realization means for them. Is it to be a good wife and good mother, or does it mean certain career achievement? What is the moving force for it: emotional stability or ambitions? What are those conditions, which prevent or stimulate their personal development?

It is important to think that humans obtain their cultural skills as members of their society (Erikson, 1970:43). Many researchers showed that personality, identity of women in exile necessarily involves crucial changes, and all of them experience a deep moral dilemma during integration into new society. New social role, which they have to adopt, often, becomes a traumatic experience with significant health and psychological consequences for them (Buijs, 1996: 1-18). However, what happens to Ukrainian women when they come to live into a new society? Is their identity challenged if they did not grow up here? How do they adapt to new rules and customs? What builds their motivation to succeed in the new society and does the climate inside the family affects them?

All these aspects will be the main track of my research. Using the theory, I will uncover some elements of life of Ukrainian women in Norway and will attempt to answer the main question of my research: “What are the crucial factors for self-realization of Ukrainian women in Norway?”

As so, the problem that guides this research will be as follows:

1. In every multicultural family there are conflicts based on multicultural differences.
2. New society within its public and private sphere challenges women's feeling of security, self-identification and self-confidence.
3. The marriage of women who are meeting their future husbands with the help of internet will experience different scenarios in relationships, compared to those who meet them "face to face".

3.2. Background and my interest for chosen subject

I have a deep interest for gender studies. Thinking about my own future and job opportunities, all of a sudden, I asked myself how other women from my country succeed here. Do they actually succeed? What are the conditions for success for other women from Ukraine? Consequently, I decided to make my research on cross-cultural marriages of Ukrainian women in Norway with the central question "*What are the crucial factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway?*" I decided to make an investigation in this field because it is a specific interest of mine. I am coming from Ukraine, a country of Eastern Europe, where the law of equal rights exists since the revolution of 1917, but at the same time, we live in a men's world and in the Ukrainian family men often reserve the final word of decision. For me as, a "representative" of a different culture the subject of feminism and women's empowerment became a serious matter. Empowerment of a human is an individual process, which leads individuals to become independent and have control over their life and choices. Empowerment promotes human rights. I decided to make a study on cases of intercultural marriages between Ukrainians and Norwegians, taking into consideration the values of gender equality and women's rights in Norway and Ukraine.

According to media, many women who choose to marry Norwegians experience discrimination inside the family, such as violence (direct or structural), moral and economical abuse and so on. In my research, I want to find out how/if, the cultural difference makes an impact on family relations of Ukrainians in Norway. What are criteria for successful integration when it concerns the women's role and position, which problems they experience in their daily life, and what determines their perspective on gender roles: economy, religion or social status? What are the determinants for self-realization for them?

There were many studies on women in exile and in intercultural marriages. Unfortunately, not much research concern particularly Ukrainians. Therefore, I base my research on case studies of cross-cultural marriages in general and relevant theories. I want to find out how women in inter-cultural marriages live their daily life, what their traditional values are, what their expectations were from new life before they arrived in Norway. What did they face, how do they participate in the social life, and how do the family relations effect their reality?

3.3. Relevance to Peace studies

Peace education is an essential part of the work of the United Nations. Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights developed means to achieve a culture of peace through "the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms"². Human development is seen through processes of teaching and learning. Peace Studies are concerned with a wide range of social conflicts, such as gender issues, generation, culture, class, race, ethnicity, nation, human society and nature, as well as inter-state relations. UNESCO has declared the decade 2001-2010 as International Decade for Culture of Peace and Non-Violence. The aim of the World Conference was dedicated to the practice of non-violence, respect of human rights and tolerance and conflict reconciliation. The further aim was to endorse equality of genders and convey education and knowledge by providing education for all. The agenda of the conference handled on important concepts, which referred to the issues of peace.

Peace education embraces all spheres of conflict, including the family microsystems. Gender relations declared to be a central issue in all attempts to construct and implement successful peace building. Peace building includes gender-awareness, women empowering, including their political, social, economic, and human rights. It fosters the ability of people to promote the conditions of nonviolence, equality, justice and human rights for all, to build democratic institutions and to sustain the environment. This is what political discourse on the "multicultural society" is usually about. However, in this thesis I want to show to the reader that the micro-level of family and personal relations is equally important and often under-explored and "silenced" in political discussions of minority issues and the multi-cultural society.

² <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

3.4. Study area

The study area for my research is not a specific city or village, it is the whole country. My informants are living in different regions of Norway and they have changed the place of their settlement sometimes more than once. Thus, the study area of my research is four different places, which I do not name due to ethical reasons.

3.5. Selection of informants

For my research, I have interviewed eight women from Ukraine. All of my informants have the same cultural backgrounds and all of them came to Norway from Ukraine at a different time, and for different reasons. Later in my work, I will specify those reasons. The age of my informants varies between 30 and 55 years old. All interviewed women are educated and have MA degree in different areas, they are urban women, four of them have been married before and they have relatively the same social backgrounds.

According to their age group, I will divide them on two “generations”. The first group will be 30-40 years old and second group will be 40-55 years old. The age difference will also be the reason for comparison of their way of thinking and self-defining. It will help me to understand if they have different views on family life, to understand how their life experience influences them, and to see which group follows faster the progression of their integration and acculturation processes, and to see if their understanding of gender roles were challenged under influence of the modern Norwegian society.

To complete my research and to investigate the challenges and changes for women, it was important for me to find informants with access to Norwegian social environment, because, in my opinion, only under such condition I would be able to learn about their integration. Or maybe just opposite would feel neglected and isolated. Thus, all of them are occupied and have successfully accomplished the courses of Norwegian language for foreigners and now having job in different fields. Therefore, all of them are socially active and none of them is a fulltime housewife.

In Norway they live in four different regions. According to this circumstance I want to look at cultural differences of regions (as the first place of their arrival in Norway), in order to see if that would form and influence the life views of their husbands, and accordingly, the husband’s expectations from their wives and behavioral norms in the family (if such exists).

3.6. Data collection techniques

I am studying in Norway for several years. Therefore, I have built a certain social network with people from Ukraine around Norway. I telephoned to five women who I previously knew and asked if they would like to be a part of my case study. I sent them questionnaire by email in order to introduce my topic and questions. After receiving their positive responses, we arranged time for interview. As I have already said, interviewees are living in different regions of Norway. Because of lack of time and financial reasons, I could not fly to their places and as so, we arranged time for skype sessions and accomplished interviewing. Later on, due to my request, my informants sent questionnaires to their friends who in their opinion could become potential sources for my research. One of those women kindly agreed to become an informant for my case study. Thus, the “snow-ball effect” gave me an opportunity to gather enough informants. Two of my informants I met personally.

Information for this master thesis was collected by personal in-depth, semi-structured interviews; and I want to use a narrative perspective for presentation of Ukrainian women’s everyday life and experiences.

Semi-structured in-depth interviewing is focused on group and helps to collect the qualitative data and report the interviewees` meanings and interpretations of their stories. In-depth interviewing helps to look into individuals’ perspectives and their ideas about the situation. It helps to collect detailed information and provides new facts which come out from analyzing of data. It provides the researcher to grasp the complete view on situation, on what happened, how and why (Blaikie, 2000: 234-236).

Narrative Inquiry is defined as a method that uses stories, autobiography, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, photos (and other artifacts), and life experience as data sources (Clandinin, 2000: 100-115). I want to present lives and worries of my informants through their own stories which were told to me during our interviews. “Narrative is a way of understanding one’s own and other’s actions, for organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (Chase, 2005:656). Narrative inquiry is not only the collection and processing of data but it focuses on the structuring of human knowledge itself. Narrative comes as a second-hand information and memory as a first-hand perception. These two become undistinguishable, an efficient and influential method of transferring knowledge

(Clandinin, 2000: 100-115). It combines real experience with the immediate memories and perceptions of the talking person. Narrative perspective tells about the structure, of what is told and applied to analyze different types of texts with focus on the relationship between experience and storytelling, expresses emotions, thoughts, and interpretations, which are produced through the telling. This method is used to describe the empirical material, which I as interviewer needed to write down in order to understand how my informants create meanings out of events in their lives. Thus, this method can be challenging. On one hand, it expects to be more than one session of interviews with one person. The first narrative sub session presumes that it starts with narrative question; for example, tell me the story of your marriage to a Norwegian. Then the informant should tell the story, without interrupting, including everything, what she would remember and would think was necessary to tell. The interview can last from ten minutes to 3 hours. The second sub session expects to be prepared with specific, focused questions on raised topics. Prepared questions should help to give better understanding on uncertain aspects of the interview (Wengraf, 2004).

On the other hand, most of informants were busy women, and six of eight could not provide me with more than one interview session. The session lasted about one and a half hours. To be able to embrace all aspects of my interest, it was very important for me to be very well prepared to interview and to ask correct questions which would encourage interviewees to tell their story about their problems and experiences. However, the “paradox” of the situation is that researcher cannot be prepared for a story, which he/she does not know in advance, and very often, the subject can turn to different direction (Chase, 2005: 660-662).

Actually, I met the “paradox” of this method during my interview sessions. I never asked provocative or “too personal” questions. For example, I never asked if woman experienced violence, however, when I asked if they had equality in the family or who was the leader in the family, I heard the most honest personal stories from women’s lives. They did not hesitate to discuss their intimate side and how exactly their husbands mistreated them. On the first glance, this information seemed irrelevant to the main purpose of this research. Nevertheless, during the analyses it gave the clearer picture of two different life stories of women, those who found husbands in internet and those, who met them in person.

Thus, the narrative method can be confusing and requests patience as well as time. As I have already said, I had time limitations, thus I preferred to use the benefits of semi- structured

interviews, such as advance prepared interview guide where the conversation can vary according to the importance of information.

Therefore, narrative data of conversations and interviews are the main sources of my data. To examine the trustworthiness of collected data I will refer to discourse analyses, and find out similarities in stories of participants. It will help to make generalization and arrive at comparable conclusion about the main question “*What are the crucial factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway?*”

3.7. Field experiences

Here, I will describe my experiences in data collecting, challenges and advantages, which I faced as a researcher.

For this master thesis, I conducted eight interviews. Four of them took place on Skype two on telephone, and two were personal interviews. I have to acknowledge that, collecting data by communication equipment such as Skype and telephone, proved to be very challenging, because I could not always see their facial expressions as a reaction to my questions and observe their body language, which can usually show if a person feels comfortable and relaxed or just the opposite.

The second challenge was to combine the role of mother, student and later a field researcher. To write a research and to have children requires extra energy and time consumption. I base this statement on my own experience. Little children occupy most of the lifetime of a woman and an individual needs to use extra resources to cover needs of children and personal ambitions, in my case is my master program. It is difficult to plan time, because kids manage to get sick in the most inappropriate moment (if the appropriate moment for sickness exists at all...). A student mother has to run to kindergarten just in the middle of inspired writing by the fascinating ideas, which finally arise in the head; and to conduct interviews adjusting to the circumstances, which are connected to children. Success in this business depends on strict self-control, self-organization and motivation. Time planning is a difficult task nevertheless crucial. When I collected the data for this research, most of the interviews took place in the evenings or on weekends. Because most of my informants are busy women, it was a multi challenge, because their children distracted them and my own children distracted me as well, for they wanted to have all my attention. For instance, I had to divide my interview with Janna on two sessions at the same day, because during the session one, my 1, 5 years old daughter

crawled on my laps and threw up inside my t-shirt. Thus, we had to postpone the interview until the time my children would sleep.

Moreover, there was the third challenge. I will repeat again that I am from Ukraine and as so I already have knowledge about Ukrainians, our mentality, customs and traditions. As well as my informants, I have been living in Norway for several years. It means I have my own experience on integration, acculturation and identity transformation and on how the life views can be challenged by new culture. Thus, it was very important that my personal attitude and preconceptions would not be involved. Information, which I was supposed to receive, should not be crossed with my preliminary ideas. I tried to avoid the impression of a biased person who already had knowledge and conclusions about their situations, problems and lifestyles. As so, I never commented on their answers, was giving simple “aha” and “hmm”, and with the nod of the head was showing that I am following the conversation and share their feelings when it was needed. On the other hand, my personal experiences made them feel more open and secure in the sense that they would be understood sincerely. In addition, the fact that I am Ukrainian made our conversations flow easily because we could speak the same language. Moreover, in many cases, our life styles may seem similar as well. This brought some difficulties into our dialogues. Here, I mean that they did not feel readily obliged to explain some of their answers to some of the questions like the role of husband in the family, saying “well, you know how it should be...” expecting me to get their idea in advance. Thus, very often I had to give examples of some other families, so they could give accurately the account of their own story. Here, I have to make the remark that some Ukrainian women are loyal to their husbands and the man is always the head of the family despite the fact that the woman works as well and as much as man. This fact was always confusing, making my informants think that I already should know the roles in relationships in their families. For instance, one of the informants is my close friend for many years. The fact that we are friends effected our conversation as well. It is well known that a researcher has to avoid biases and preconceptions during the conversation; hence, she shared her stories with me every day since we met. Thus, when I asked her to tell me her story she just said that I already know everything and I just can write without her answers. Therefore, I had to explain that it was important for me to hear the whole story from her and to hear about her feelings. Yet, being her friend for many years served me a favor. At first, I knew that she was honest with me when she was giving answers to my questions, at the second; I could remind her episodes from her family life which she

forgot to mention. As the result, it helped me to collect extensive data with all-embracing scope of feelings, thoughts and emotions of informant.

Another disadvantage for me was that fact that most of interviewees felt confused when I asked them if I could tape our conversation. In order to make them feel comfortable, I promised not to use the machine without their permission and during our conversation was making small paper notes with key words. Such “friendly woman to woman talk” made them feels more comfortable and relaxed. After the end of each interview sessions, I was writing the whole dialogue with my ready questions and their answers, making the evaluation and analyzing work of written text.

In addition, I experienced the fifth challenge while making face-to-face interviews. Both times, we had two days sessions. The first interview was with Natalia at her house and in Ukrainian tradition, she wanted to show the hospitality, she proposed to have coffee and cake, which baked for our meeting. While having coffee it was difficult to start interview at once, we had more like women talk touching different subjects. At the end, we started the interview session but she was always distracted with memories about Ukraine, her family and so on. Soon after that, her husband came and she did not want to continue in his presence. We agreed to meet again in the city library. The second time we met she was more concentrated on the subject and was giving more precise answers. It seemed that the interview session gave her the feeling of unease, there was no more friendly talk and our meeting gave an impression of an official arrangement for both of us. She tried to look smart and give correct answers and to make good impression. The second face-to face interview was with Lidia. When I began to collect informants for my master thesis, she gladly agreed to give an interview. She said that to talk is her favorite thing to do. That was so much true! The interview with her was a challenge. Because Lidia talked a lot; was joking, giving many examples, and was jumping from subject to subject and sometimes she could not remember what the question was; and that is why we had two days session. Hence, she was much opened, did not try to give a “correct answer” and did not hesitate to talk about intimate experience and problems.

The time and volume limitations of this research were a challenge as well. Thanks to my informants, I collected rich and all-embracing data. Hence, the requirements for this master thesis do not allow me to reveal all matters of Ukrainians narrations.

Regarding the experiences and challenges that I met, I want to add the fact that all stories were very personal, which included emotional suffering and life tragedy of my informants. I felt a strong empathy for those women who had health consequences after marriage. A researcher perhaps should not involve personal feelings and should avoid biases during the analyses of interviews. Indeed, it was a difficult process for me. Each time during the analyses of interviews, I took their feelings too deep into my heart and wanted to show their tragedy as detailed as possible. However, because of page limitation in my thesis, I could keep only the most relevant quotations and could not give the voice to all women when I was willing to do so. Meanwhile, all their stories left a deep trace in my heart and even after this work was finished, I continue to think how much misfortune foreign wives endure in misery, silently, with their experiences of depression and helplessness.

The last experience, which I want to describe, is to be a foreign student and to write a paper according to new standards. It was an interesting practice, because I graduated from Ukraine and there are a few essential differences in the thesis writing process. First, it is the style of writing. As any educational system, there are certain requirements for academic texts. In our system, we are not allowed to write, “I found”, and “I think” or “in my opinion”. The proper style is to write “we” instead of “I”, here “we” means my supervisor and me. When I was a student in Ukraine our study coordinator explained, that to be allowed to say “I”, a student should achieve a certain academic degree, and since we are only studying, to say “I” is very inappropriate. Second, we were taught to use own opinion as less as possible and to give as many references as possible to famous authors. The explanation is the same. The student is not in a position to epilate with own opinion, until she achieves an academic degree. The language should be as much incomprehensible as possible; it shows the seriousness of work and it is called academic language. I found it as a complete contradiction to the Norwegian system. At first, I felt very inconvenient to write about my opinion and conclusions, and felt that each of my sentences I should refer to famous intellectuals. On the course on research methods, I learned that the language should be simple and easy to read for people with any educational background, it should be interesting, clear and easy flowing. The last difference is that we are not provided with such course in Ukraine at all. We were listening to brief information about the style of writing, and later with all questions, we had to refer to the supervisor. I want to believe that I comprehended the Norwegian style of writing, though it is very different from Ukrainian.

3.8. Ethics in research

”Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of informant’s world. Their manners should be good and their ethic should be strict”. (Stake, 1995:459)

The interviewee shares private information with the interviewer, opening the door to their private life. In order to start a trustworthy dialogue with my informants I presented myself, my studying area, purpose of the fieldwork, and asked in advance which area of discussion seems inappropriate to them.

Owing to the policy of anonymity, all names of informants were changed. Protection of informants’ private lives and anonymizing of their location are important ethical issues and this provides trust between the interviewer and the interviewee, which is decisive in order to create the contact, create an atmosphere of mutual trust and receive honest and candid information from them. Each story and confidentiality of each informant is a delicate issue, and following this ethic is a fundamental matter for showing respect to the informants, and not misusing their trust, which is established between two partners during the interview session.

In order to fulfill the ethical norms, each time before the interview session would start, I provided each informant with necessary and detailed information about this research. I was telling them about the main question of this thesis, told about the purpose of the research, told them that their names would be changed in order to protect their privacy and anonymity, and that they can withdraw their data any time. Each informant I provided with my telephone number, the name of the institution and department where I am currently studying. I guaranteed that all collected data should be eliminated after I transcribe it.

Only after providing them with the detailed information about the confidentiality of our interviews and their agreement we could start the conversation.

3.9. The subject of interviews

Daily debates in Norwegian media are dedicated to immigrants and cross-cultural marriages. When I prepared my interview topics, I thoroughly studied materials about women in exile, and theories and cases about cross-cultural marriages in Norway.

My aim was to depict women's everyday life, with their problems and challenges, and to investigate the conditions for their development in the new society. Mainly, I wanted to learn which challenges Ukrainian women met when they came to Norway, if their expectations were justified or not, how they succeeded with the integration process under the influence of new customs and traditions and what their feelings were about being an immigrant here.

In addition, the problem of cross-cultural communication was very important for me as well. I wanted to illuminate such issues as relations in their families and how these relations may affect my informants.

The most interesting for me was to investigate if women from my research had a specific and unique case, which was not studied yet. As so, I focused my interest on the factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway, the country with culture, which is not so different, on the surface, from their own.

I presented all questions to my informants before the conversation started. It was important to them to have a short introduction to the following interview and for me it was important to have their willingness to talk about the given subject.

4. Theoretical outline

In this chapter, I will present theories, which I used in this Master thesis in order to answer the main question of the research “*What are the crucial factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway?*” In order to answer to this question, I believe that it is important to clarify what actually Ukrainian identity means and how women in Ukraine understand the notion of self-realization. To be able to do this, I will draw upon theories such as identity and gender identity, feminism, symbolic interaction, social exchange, family system theory, critical psychology and social exchange theories.

4.1. Identity. How the Modern Ukrainian society influenced the gender identity of Ukrainian women

American psychologist Erik H. Erikson introduced the term identity and defined it as pointing to self-understanding of individual (Kupiainen, 2004:44). However, there is no agreement among scientific minds on one certain definition on the notion of identity. The interpretation of the identity term depends on the scientific field and research tradition, however, scholars agree, that identity is not something static, it is always in progress, in development. Rutherford described the identity as complex processes, which includes the way of interaction with each other, sameness and otherness with people, consisting of such subcategories as gender, nationality and ethnicity. “Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. It is also about your social relationships, your complex involvement with others, and in modern world, these have become ever more complex and confusing. Each of us living with a variety of potentially contradictory identities, which battle within us for allegiance: as men or women, black or white, British or European” (Rutherford, 1998:88). Ergo, the personal identity is a complex process, which corresponds to the life and world processes around us. As Hall stated, the identity is a “play of history, culture and power” (Hall, 1998: 225). Cultural identity of Ukrainians is a reflection of this statement, because it has always been a subject to transformation due to historical and political reasons.

Modern Ukrainian identity started its formation in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a result of liberation from the Soviet Union, Ukraine faced a crisis of national identity. If to consider that “identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others” (Rutherford, 1998:88), referring to

Rutherford's preceding statement; Ukrainian people did not share the sense of belonging. Moreover, a vast of differences in political, historical, and symbolic meanings were on the surface. As Kubicek (2008:17) named it "a state without a modern nation". Andrew Wilson the Lecturer in Ukrainian Studies at the University College in London suggested that the Ukrainian identity is very complex, it includes a "substantial middle group between Ukrainians and Russians", and he names it as "other Ukraine" which actually means that Ukrainians have a dual identity. Moreover, he states that the dual identity of Ukrainians "is a result of unfinished process of nation building, which was influenced by complicated historic, cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences inside the society"³. According to Wilson's survey, 27 percent of Ukrainian citizens identify themselves as both Ukrainian and Russian, 30-35 percent consider themselves ethnically Ukrainian but whose language of preference is Russian. For that reason, it was not an easy task to come to agreement between "Russified" east and "Ukrainized" west on what to count the common national identity. In order to establish a collective identity and produce the feeling of ethnic and national belonging, the government took the course on creating certain policies that would empower Ukrainian ethnic groups and to spread national ideas to the broad masses.

The identification process promoted representation of cultural objects, cultural events, revising the history, glorifying rural folklore and exploiting and politicizing the traditional outlooks image of famous Ukrainian poets in the constructed self-images of popular Ukrainian politics. For example, the ex-president of Ukraine Viktor Yushenko, who often could be seen on public in traditional male shirt "vishivanka" or ex-prime minister of Ukraine Yuliya Timoshenko who always has the traditional elements in her outlook and her famous braid, which is perceived as the symbolic representation of the core of Ukrainian culture (Kulick 2010). Such symbolic representation and visualizing of core cultural elements should arise patriotic feelings and feeling of unity in people. One of the outstanding features of modern Ukrainian society was declining of Soviet hegemony and establishing new reality in opposition to Russia.

According to Hall (1998: 224), identity "grounded in retelling of the past" and as Friedman (1994: 124-132) argued, post-colonial countries create new history by way of narratives and respect of the past in the present. By means of mass media and education system, Ukraine created a great and prideful past for its citizens. New Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian

³<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/ukrainian-national-identity-the-other-ukraine>

language was prized and fashioned. One of the bright examples of establishing nation building and self-identification was abolishing of the Soviet gender politics. The typical Soviet woman was a working mother, who participated in both labor and household divisions (Ashwin, Lytkina 2004). Solari (2014) in her analyses on migration and gender policies in Post-Soviet Ukraine writes that “In post-Soviet discourse, Soviet gender policies are now blamed for distorting the true and biologically determined natures of men and women creating instead ‘weak men’ and ‘masculine women’”. The new cultural discourse accused the Soviet on “having destroyed the ethno-nation, the national character and ‘traditional’ national values (Zhurzhenko, 2001). Thus, newly established gender discourse promoted the image of “Berehynya” as an ideal image of modern Ukrainian woman and shifted the ideology of “iron soviet woman” who could build socialism side by side with a man toward traditional segregation of gender roles. “Berehynya” is a pagan goddess, which represents matriarchate, the home keeping, and a mother of the nation. She expresses “the perfect Ukrainian woman, the spirit of the Ukrainian home, the ideal mother...the preserver of language and national identity” (Rubchak, 2001). To assume the role of Berehynya is a “way of getting back to the essence of what it means to be Ukrainian” (Rubchak, 2001). In order to visualize the image of Berehynya, the 40-foot-tall column with statue on the top of it was assembled in Kyiv.

Thus, the academic, public and political discourses based on pagan myth validated an age-old history in respect to the present integration and unification of people inside the country, and sacrificed the basic human rights of women on self-determination and imposed for her a new identity – the identity of a “housewife” (Solari, 2014).

4.2. Is Western feminism model compatible for Ukraine?

It is a fact that the rebellious march of modern feminism started in the Western World.⁴ Desperate housewives who saw their purpose in life in something more than house work and raising children began to question the existing social order and sense of their being. Betty Friedan was in the avant-garde of the feminist movement. The New York Times described her as “the feminist crusader and author...forever known as the suburban housewife who started

⁴The Soviet proclaimed rights and freedoms for women after the revolution of 1917. This proclamation was a benchmark for feminist movements and for struggle for gender equality in the West. However, according to the communist ideology the aspect of gender was formulated differently in reference to the West. Men and women were considered as one unit: humanity. Everybody was called a "comrade" (tovarish). The purpose of each tovarish was to build communism, and the matter of class prevailed the gender.

revolution”⁵ . In her book “The Feminine Mystique” (1963), she described her views about position of woman whose aim was to please her husband, and criticized the happy image of housewife. She argued that woman could not be happy if the housework limits her personal development; moreover, such social norms are applied through man’s perception. She based the plot of the book on her personal life and feelings. She described the social reality of USA in 1950s, when the perception of an ideal family was a working husband, beautiful and educated housewife committed to the family. She disputed that such life did not bring satisfaction to each woman, on the contrary, women felt oppressed; hence, their socially constructed stereotypes on gender role divisions discouraged them to revolt against the existent norms. The perception on women according to biological discourse did not presume that woman could have other needs rather than family comfort. This, in her opinion, led to crisis of identity and crisis of personal growth. She saw the solution in uniting women and integrating them into public spheres. Establishing of women’s organizations should bring to the end gender discrimination and balance work and family for women (Friedan 1963)⁶. Feminist movements struggled on braking stereotypes on defined “by nature” role of woman, which primarily was to serve husband and children. As well as Friedan, French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, in her autobiographical essay “the Second Sex”, analyzed the ambivalent position of woman and how she became oppressed by social norms. “One is not born a woman, but becomes it” (Beauvoir). She meant that social constructs does not leave the space for freedom of choice for women and perception on her identity is static. The female role was relegated to domestic arena and if woman wanted to make a career, she has been considered deviant and abnormal. Beauvoir believed that women’s emancipation was a key for the existing problem and the feminist movement would move forward. Statements where woman was represented through man’s perception should be left in the past (L.-Gothlin: 1996:218-242). Liberal feminism claimed equal opportunities for both genders through political and legal reforms, and changed public attitudes toward women’s free choice (Hooks, 2000:21-34). The most important guarantee of independence they saw in financial self-reliance and private property (Brayson, 1984:21-35). Equally important in the feminist camp were such issues as right to abortion, sexual harassment, and equal opportunity to vote, equality in education, equal pay for equal work, access to health care, and drawing the attention to the issue of sexual and domestic violence against women (Hooks, 2000:40).

⁵http://www.bradley.edu/sites/bettyfriedantribute/documents/rotated_NYT_obit_Margalit_Fox_2-6-2006_pA20.pdf

⁶http://www.amazon.com/The-Feminine-Mystique-Betty-Friedan/dp/0393322572#reader_0393322572

Achievements of feminist movements went far apart from the division of labor. Their involvement in religion brought prominent changes inside some of the religious institutions. They managed to break stereotypes on the role of woman, which was defined “by nature”. Now in liberal branches of Protestant Christianity, like for example in Norway, women can be members of the clergy, become priests and sing in the church core. Gross (2013:35) argues that the religion is not only about worshiping God; it is a powerful source for organizing society. Due to religious narratives, biological gender has different meanings and roles and such segregation benefited men’s empowerment and oppression of women. When women brought reforms to the Church, they improved their status in the society gradually. Thus, gender researches are working on neutralizing the gender barriers, feminist movements are fighting for freedom of women who are still oppressed by religion or patriarchic systems all over the globe.

In the context of Ukraine, this process has been taken away from reality. According to famous Ukrainian journalist, historian and writer Sergei Gavrilov, the ideology of Western Feminist movement became an academic field rather than practical work. He states, that in present there are more than four hundred charity funds and NGOs financing gender research programs in Post-Soviet space. For the last twenty years of Ukrainian independency, over 1.8 billion dollars were attracted on the gender research aims. Despite, the result is minimal, because it is a difficult task to overcome prejudices on gender views among population and lawmakers; and feminist matter terminated on the level of social demagogy among the politicians⁷. Consequently, Ukrainian modern reality did not face the debut of new fighters for women’s rights but faced new category of women. They are not proclaiming equality, they do not question traditional biological and social roles, and hence they preserve space in politics and business for themselves without radical notions. One such figure is world famous Yuliya Timoshenko. She is a representative of new the stream of women who achieved a high rank in their carriers. Oksana Kis⁸ in her article “Choosing without Choice: Predominant Models of Femininity in Contemporary Ukraine” called this phenomenon as “feminine feminism”⁹. Hence, ex-prime minister never called herself a feminist. Moreover, she pointed out that she

⁷СергейГаврилов, Николаев, для «фраЗы» <http://fraza.ua/analytics/08.03.11/110982.html>
17-08-2012, 07:13

⁸ Oksana Kis, historian and ethnographer, is a research fellow at the Institute of Ethnology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Lviv; she is also a Co-Director of the Lviv Research Center “Women and Society” (NGO).

⁹http://www.academia.edu/1397855/Beauty_Will_Save_The_World_Feminine_Strategies_in_Ukrainian_Politics_and_the_Case_of_Yulia_Tymoshenko

regrets that she cannot be a good wife for her husband and make a homemade food for him. Nevertheless, she believes that woman should not exclude herself from social life, receive education and find self-realization in the carrier as well. Her image for media and for people is a prototype of Berehynya. Joan Landes ((2001), in Kis 2007) stated, “Women are constituted as political subjects in the new nation not only through the practice of motherhood but also through the complicated process of visual identification with iconic representations of virtue and nationalism”. Timoshenko was the epiphany of the mother of Ukrainian nation by her outlook. With its symbolic meanings, she underlined that she urges all women of the country to remember that they are primarily mothers, daughters, and wives. I decided to use Yuliya Timoshenko as an example, because her image has a semantic meaning. In popular discourse, such self-representation demonstrates how to be a real woman. In politics, she implies the image of Berehynya, i.e. mother of nation and her appearance is always attractive, eye catching and emphasizes her femininity. Such image is distinctively different from her western women-colleagues. Western feminist theories suggest that woman who wants to achieve equal rights with men should avoid erotic association with her outlook. This is one of the measures for woman to be accepted as equal partner but not according to her biological gender with following connotations. In other words, woman should not look like a sexual object. In Ukraine, the situation is different. The image of Barbie is highly popular in modern Ukraine and associated with being beautiful, sexy and charming. It became the representation of femininity (Kis 2007). Ergo, the new gender identity of Ukrainian woman consists of two idealistic parts: which are spiritual Berehynya and sexy Barbie. This is one more confrontation to the Western feminism, which highly criticizes sexist propaganda, because sexism is gender discrimination, and a violation of human rights. The image of Barbie correlates with gender discrimination in media and advertising. As an example of destructive and diminishing image of woman in advertising, I want to demonstrate the experience of Ukraine researcher Oxana Kis. She writes, “A billboard advertisement demonstrating a new model of a telephone with the famous logo Ideas for Life serves as a textbook example. Next to the gadget the woman is partially naked, with hair style of Japanese geisha, her back is decorated with a massive tattoo and all this culminates the inscription The Elegant design, which obviously concerns both luxury items, namely eastern beauty and newfangled telephone” (Kis, 2010). She observed how the exclusiveness and beauty of woman could be transmitted as an idea of being an accessory for man.

Patriarchic discourse represents the men's dominance as natural, obvious and fair. As so, the discriminative practices against women become normal, common and socially accepted (Kis 2010). Moreover, at the annual International Economic Forum in Davos in 2011, the ex-president Yanukovich decided to attract foreign investors by promoting the beauty of Ukrainian women. He said "In order to 'Switch On Ukraine' it is enough to look at it with your own eyes when chestnuts start blooming in Kiev and Ukrainian women start undressing. To see this beauty is amazing"¹⁰. Actually, his statement symbolized that Ukrainian women are performing the assigned mission, namely they are making men happy, bringing them an esthetic and erotic fulfillment. This provoked immediate reaction of FEMEN activists as public protests. The FEMEN demanded the respect from the president to women and right to be treated equally. Hence, the radical methods of this Ukrainian feminist organization, which uses their topless bodies for protests, are criticized and produce resonance inside the society. This circumstance makes the gap between feminist ideas and Ukrainian society more significant. The survey of 2012, which was conducted in Ukraine by the monitoring agency NewsEffector, showed that only 9% of women in Ukraine consider themselves feminist, 48% of women would agree to some equities, and 43% are against feminists (10% among them are radically against)¹¹.

In conclusion, of this subchapter I would like to say that the sociological research illustrated that the ideas of feminism are far from thoughts of Ukrainian citizens. Most women do not share them and believe that traditional roles should prevail.

4.3. Marriage in social exchange discourse

In this subchapter, I would like to draw attention upon two approaches. First, is the theory of marriage and second, is social exchange theory. I found these theories relevant because I want to show again the difference between social constructs in the Western World and in Ukraine (though the society considers itself part of Western civilization) and with help of social exchange discourse I aim to theorize how women make their marriage choices and what the crucial factors are for their choices.

The family researcher Stephanie Coontz draws attention to explanation on how marriage was invented with basis on Anglo-American anthropological theory. According to the theory,

¹⁰ <http://postsovietpost.stanford.edu/discussion/ukraines-other-half>

¹¹ <http://newseffector.com/news/78867-v-rossii-vsego-7-feministok-45-muzhchinam-takie-zhenschiny-otvratitelny.html>

“women were weaker gender; they could not make tools, could not hunt and...could not take care of themselves and their offspring”. As so, they needed males who could protect them. Thusly, they “initiated marriage by offering to trade sex for protection and food” (Coontz, 2005: 49). Therefore, traditional family approach with male breadwinner and woman homemaker was successfully accustomed to this theory. Later, marriage became an economic and social institution. Men and women married to increase land or wealth or to booster social or political connections. Love seldom had anything to do with it (Pope, 2010:10). Obviously, marriage was not about the individual needs and desires of man and woman. It had much to do with getting good in laws and increasing one’s family labor force. Marriage became a very important social institution as it organized the division of labor and power by gender and age, confirming men’s authority over women and determining the inheritance rights. Marriage was the main source of social security, medical care, and unemployment insurance. (Coontz, 2005: 6)

Western feminists’ ideas originated and developed new perception on marriage. According to feminists, the marriage should not work as an institution with unbalanced power, where man is the decision maker and woman is a submissive edition to the man, but rather marriage is supposed to become a union of equal partners based on love. It was a revolutionary idea, which meant, that marriage should become more secure if to get rid “of the cynism that accompanied mercenary marriage and encouraging couples to place each other first in their affections and loyalties. Basing marriage on love and companionship represented a break with thousands of years of tradition” (Coontz, 2005:149). Tara P.-Pope in “The Science of Good Marriage” (2010:11) debates upon new marriage rules. She states, “With more women in the labor force, the traditional male-breadwinner, female-homemaker marriage has become less common. Today women are contributing more financially to relationships than earlier generations, and men are contributing more of the domestic duties...Marriage today is less about dividing economic and domestic duties and more about shared interests and mutual happiness. Men and women are more likely to marry someone like themselves, with a similar educational background, and that, in turn, lead to more stable relations.” This is the perfect representation and clear interpretation of the Western family model, which is based on western feminists ideals. As Weber pointed out, “the obvious interpretation need not to be the right one” (as cited in Smaling, 2007:318), simply saying, the application of Western concepts will not explain the individual motives in Ukraine, which by the way claims itself to be Western and modern. In spite of the will to become part of the Western civilization, the

state does not promote women's rights, on the contrary; it declares new policies governed by traditional approach. As so, the relation inside the family differs as well, and women set different priorities for choosing life partner. In order to understand her motives for marriage, it is reasonable to provide a causal explanation of circumstances (Wintch, 1990:45), which brought her to such behavior and what the consequences are.

Ukraine faces a period of economic crises, labor force is unequally distributed, and the state does not provide social support for citizens nowadays (the prize for European integration), as so financial stability and security is a core factor when women choose future spouse. Sara P.-Pope (2010) generalizes in her conclusions, and argues that these two factors have nothing to do with the marriage today. She states that today in the modern society people set different priorities and they have different motives for marriage, namely love, trust and common interests. Indeed, these matters play important role for selecting the partner, hence they are not predominant and not widespread. In Ukraine, the formula stability-security-love is working as proxy on the way for self-realization. To explain the criteria, which motivates Ukrainian women in their choice, social exchange approach is the most relevant.

“Social exchange theory is a social psychological perspective that explains social relationships as a process of negotiated exchange between parties that is based on the concept of rewards, punishments and resources” (Homans, 1985 in Rosenbaum 2009), and on the use of subjective cost-benefit analyses. Reward and value are the main concepts of this theory (Winch, 1990:49). During interaction, people make rational choices according to the situation (Emerson 2015) and want to receive maximum benefit with minimum costs. The formula of choice making process is “gain – costs = reward”. In other words, the decision is based on advantages and disadvantages for individual, which follows from the situation. Lawler and Thye (1999) applied this theory to the choice of marriage partner. In their opinion, among all possible partners, an individual finds the one who can satisfy his/her needs in the best way, and the partner considered as the largest source for reward. Consequently, the fundamental approach of this theory is the process of evaluating the reward from the relations and evaluating of partners based on formula "What do I get out of it?"-"What do I lose by doing it"="My decision". Accordingly, personal characteristics of the partner represented as some merchandise, and so these goods have a certain price on the marriage market. Consequently, if the reward/outcome is a security-stability-love, than the rational formula poorly advocates to the demand of women on Ukrainian marriage market. Moreover, if a woman also searches

for a way to combine her views on gender and family with Western human rights, she enters the global marriage market and this circumstance performs as a pull factor for migration.

4.4. Migration

Migration can be described as population movements associated with the change of residence. Due to globalization processes, national boundaries opened up for people's mobility. There are always many different reasons why people migrate, and migration across both geographic and cultural boundaries established increasing interest in studies about migration.

Social scientists and politicians consider migration as an “extraordinary complex phenomenon”¹². In recent years, international migration has been characterized as “feminized” because of big number of female migrants. Feminized migration was mostly studied in connection with labor migration; but there is one more category - marriage migration. Scholars who study this phenomenon in context of family reunification see the migrants as ““tied movers,” rather than viewing these women as independent migrants” (Lee, 2013). In 1970s, this type of migration was known as a “mail-order-bride”. However, it was a voluntary form of migration, which was organized through the exchange of letters and newspaper advertisements. Nowadays internet agencies are continuing this tradition. The main characteristic of this trend is that the groom is from economically more developed country, and the bride is from less developed country. Donna R. Lee (1998) in her research on “Mail-Order Bride Industry” argues, “The mail-order bride business promotes a form of sexual exploitation that resembles both prostitution and involuntary servitude”. However, sociocultural anthropologist Nicole Constable (2005:167), in her research on marriage migration, came to the conclusion that these brides are not always victims and often become “active agents in their own rights”. Despite the debates among scholars on how to define the woman's role in this type of migration, they agree that unstable economy and a desperate desire to obtain better life conditions and better future are working as “push-factor” to leave her place of origin. Moreover, gender discrimination is also involved in cross-cultural marriages and migration in general. Immigrant women often do not find socioeconomic advantages (Farstad 2004). Moreover, they are often employed in low-status jobs as unskilled labor and with little chance for promotion. Thus, their participation in the labor force may reinforce their vulnerable position (Gressgård 2002:39). One more serious problem that scholars argue about is discrimination of women in such marriages. Katharine Charsley

¹²<http://eeas.europa.eu/migration/>

(2014) suggested that in cross-cultural marriages bride and groom set different priorities. Migrant wives believe that the marriage and migration will change her life for better and she will find a progressive partner with progressive ideas, who would invite her to the comfortable life style in gender equal society. Men, on the contrary are seeking wives with traditional values who would be willing to participate to do all or most of the domestic duties.

Thus, marriage-related migration generates an ever growing interest among scholars. Moreover, it “reflects a belated recognition that, rather than being a marginal topic for migration studies, this is an area in which issues of crucial importance are brought to the fore, including the gendered nature of migration, the diversity of contemporary international mobility, the centrality of relationships for understanding migration motivations, experiences and patterns, and tensions between human rights and immigration control” (Charsley 2014).

4.5. Integration process

Due to globalization and mass migration, integration and coherence of immigrants to new societies became an important political agenda and topic of discussion for many Western governments and the public in general.

Durkheim (1893:354) defined integration as a precondition to “social solidarity”. In sociological tradition, the definition of integration is often connected to the notion of participation. The aim of the integration process is to help immigrants to become coherent members of the new society. In order to achieve full integration, both immigrants and the host society should share the public sphere (Jenkins, 1967:267).

Norwegian government adopted many laws and White Papers that refer to immigrants and their integration. For example, White Paper No. 17 (Stortingsmelding No. 17) states that everyone, regardless of background, should have equal opportunities, rights and obligations to participate in society. To improve the quality of reception at entry, the Government adopted a new law in June 2003 and presented an introductory program for newly arrived immigrants. According to this law, all newcomers must participate in this program. Attendance to courses of Norwegian language is mandatory, and represents the most important part of the introduction program. At the end of the program, a person is provided with a temporary job where she/he can practice the language. Language practice is an opportunity to explore the social network, to improve language skills and participate in the labor market. Public agencies, which coordinate the integration of immigrants, put the responsibility of successful

integration on the immigrants' shoulders. As such, the integration is meant to be a subjective experience and depends completely on individuals' efforts. However, there are opposing views; in her book *The Migration Debate* (2011), Sarah Spencer, a Deputy Director at COMPAS¹³, challenges the idea that integration is primarily an individual responsibility. In her opinion, migrants, receiving institutions and society are equally responsible for successful integration. Spencer proposed a new definition for integration "integration refers to the processes of interaction between migrants and the individuals and institutions of the receiving society that facilitate the socio-economic, cultural, social and civic participation of migrants and an inclusive sense of identity and belonging" (as cited in Gidley 2014). This means that integration is not only participation, but interaction as well. Local people and newcomers should adapt to each other.

It is common that foreigners from developing countries are met with prejudice. As Albert Einstein once said, "It is harder to crack prejudice than an atom"¹⁴. Newcomers are in minority, and therefore they experience a certain sense of powerlessness. New comers lack knowledge about local norms and culture and as a consequence they are not always accepted by the majority. Insecurity creates fear and anxiety. The feeling of insecurity and anxiety increases frustrations, which may transform to aggressive feelings and hatred towards everything unfamiliar. The feeling of unacceptance may lead to disappointment, to mental health problems and conflicts, and in some cases even to physical aggression (Eitinger, 1981: 53-78).

Integration can be achieved on economic and social levels. The desirable outcome of economic integration is that foreigners will work and support themselves and they will not be "social clients" dependent on the system. (Hagelund 2002).

Integration on social and cultural level is more complicated. It includes the feeling of satisfaction, motivation and control over his or her life. Satisfaction consists of many different elements as well; good health, feeling of security and feeling of acceptance in the host society. (Gross, Z., Davis, L., & Diab, A.K. 2013).

Axel Honneth focuses on relations of power, recognition and respect. He suggested that the "good life" depends on three forms of recognition. According to Honneth, the first form of

¹³ The University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS)

¹⁴<http://www.saveaquote.com/quotes/celebrities/quote-1579>

recognition can be achieved in private sphere, when the person develops personal trust to himself, his values, etc. The second form is the recognition of his/her personal rights by the society. It gives self-respect. The third form is cultural, political and professional fellowship. In order to achieve these three forms, the person has to adapt him/her-self to new conditions. During the adaptation process, the personality can change. To be open for changes the person should feel a sense of belonging to community. This gives the feeling of self-importance. The antithesis of acceptance is infringement such as offence or violence. If these three fundamental needs for recognition are ignored, it causes conflict. Different forms of infringement in private and public life produce struggle for acceptance. Acceptance on different levels is the condition for a good life and good integrated society. In order to find out which challenges Ukrainian women in Norway have, we shall look at their quality of life in this country. Life is the process, which consists of social and environmental spheres that surround the individual. The interaction between people in these spheres can be positive or negative, depending on personal perception. For most of humankind, it is important to interact, to be the part of the “team”, to have own opinion, to speak and to be heard, consequently to be involved in social processes and feel as part of the society. If it does not happen and the person fails in being accepted by the society, he feels helplessness and humiliation (krenkelse) (Ahmadi, 2008: 21).

5. Discussion

In this chapter, I would like to analyze and process the data of interviews in order to answer the main question of my research “*What are the crucial factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway?*” To be able to do this, I will examine the similarities and differences in women’s stories. Here, I will describe how they met with their future husbands, their expectations from life in a new country, relations with husbands, their feelings, problems they encountered and how they adjusted themselves to the new environment. I will support my analyses with relevant theory, my own reflections and women’s interviews, where women tell about their cross-cultural families, explain their life situations, conflicts, challenges, worries, how they adjusted to the Norwegian lifestyle and whether they achieved self-realization in the new society or not.

5.1. About informants

In order to answer the main question of my research “*What are the crucial factors for self-realization of Ukrainian women in Norway?*” I have interviewed eight women from Ukraine who are married or have been previously married in Norway.

I obtained basic biographical data of women’s life, occupation in Ukraine and in Norway after their marriage; the purpose was to learn about their hopes and expectations from life in the new country, and their experiences from family life, work and networks in the new country. I received reflections on their husbands and marriage characteristics.

The age of my respondents varies from 33 to 55 years old. All of them are urban women with university education from their home country in different fields.

All eight women got married to Norwegian men. Six of them (Angela, Marina, Raisa, Lidia, Natalia and Janna) came to Norway as wives and two came to Norway because of different purposes. These two met their future husbands in Norway after they had been living here for some time.

Three of the eight women met their husbands personally and five of them met their husbands through the internet.

Four of them had been married previously.

Four of my informants had children with their ex-partners in Ukraine.

Three of eight women got divorced with their Norwegian husbands, one of them started a new relationship after divorce and now she is single again, one got engaged with another Norwegian partner this winter.

Five women have one or more children with Norwegian husbands.

Three of my informants are studying for a degree at university in Norway. One of them is having a part-time job as secretary; two have been working until last year, now they are concentrated on studying. Five of the eight informants are having full time jobs.

Only two of the eight women were married to men who have university education.

All interviews were done in Russian and were translated in to English by me¹⁵. I recognize that there is the risk of bias, inaccurate translation, and the risk of picking words from a context of conversation. Overall, I attempted to depict the true picture of women's life stories and present the most accurate translation based on the subjects' interviews¹⁶.

I would like to divide my data analysis into two parts. First, I would like to examine the interviews with those women who came to Norway as wives. In the second part, I will look into the cases of Alina who came to Norway as a student, and Diana who came as an au pair. I believe it is necessary to do so because the purpose of their arrival was different, as so they had different expectations. Then, Alina and Diana will be in the spotlight. Further, I will compare the life situations of these two groups: those women that arrived here as wives and women who came to Norway because of other reasons.

Moreover, as a preface to data analysis, I would like to clarify the notion of being a Ukrainian woman. I think it is essential because it will help the reader to understand the women's priorities and their attitude to the marriage.

¹⁵ Russian is the most widespread language in Ukraine, despite Ukrainian is the official language. The majority of the population, especially in the Eastern part uses Russian as a mother tongue.

¹⁶The most important information about my subjects is displayed in Table in the appendix 1.

Many times during our interviews, I experienced that not all my interviewees had a ready answer for the question “what were your expectations from marriage?” They were confused and began to think, and the answer was “Like any other woman”. It made me question what marriage actually meant for Ukrainian women. What is the purpose of marriage? Could this purpose be different for women of other nationalities? Which cultural aspects differentiate them from other women and influence their decisions, behavior and way of thinking?

The identity of Ukrainian woman is based on her culture and traditions. In order to understand how they perceive marriage and their place in the marital union, I want to look deeper at the conditions that constitute their self-identification as a woman, and to explain what shapes their understanding of the family and the role as a wife.

5.2. Ukrainian woman - Identity in transition

Identity involves matters of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion. It combines the whole spectrum of psychological, material, and spiritual factors.

Communism brought emancipation of women in private and public life (Zhurzhenko, 2001). In Post-Soviet Ukraine with its transition to market economy, every day struggle with economic difficulties and imported western culture with its sexualized image of woman in media, contributed to a new social concept. Women adopted new values from the fashion industry and a new self-image. According to construct accessibility theory, the perceivers automatically categorize targets based on salient physical cues, for example on gender or clothes¹⁷. Ergo, extremely feminine women encouraged men to perceive them as sexual objects. This led men to adopt harmful attitudes and negative stereotypes about women, sexuality, intimacy, and relationships (Brooks, 1995:13).

Thus, Lidia in her interview told that menfolk in her country could not satisfy her emotional needs and she was disappointed in relationships with Ukrainians.

Lidia: *“I was disappointed in our men. I wanted to have long-term relationships; I wanted to get married, to have family and children. In spite of that [men] wanted relations with no obligations for future”.*

¹⁷http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0022103185710220/1-s2.0-S0022103185710220-main.pdf?_tid=9b72ebae-d23a-11e4-b1c9-00000aab0f01&acdnat=1427211168_07e26d48fdb86c984f6e1119f8727088

For her it was important to start relations with a man who would become her husband in the future. She meant that woman her age should think about family and children.

Since we live in a system of social relations and we are products of our society, it makes a significant impact on us. Whether we like it or not we feel we have followed the norms accepted in society. Like in any society with traditional values, there are certain expectations about a woman's role and her mission. After some age, it is commonly expected that women should be married and have children. Lonely women may feel very uncomfortable, catching pitiful glances.

Lidia continues: *I was at the age when having a family and a child had become a priority, I was in a desperate period when all my thoughts were about having the family. Hence, people will look at you and judge you if you give birth without having a husband...*

Moreover, there is a view that each woman has a maternal instinct, the desire for procreation. It is natural that woman dreams not just to have a baby, but also to create comfortable and safe conditions for the child. In order to do this, she is looking for a life partner and the father of the unborn child, who can take care of her and the kid and provide security for both of them. The stereotypes of traditional society are deeply rooted inside of Ukrainian mentality. First, it is the perception of man as the breadwinner. None of my informants mentioned that they prioritized to be a homemaker, on the contrary; all of them were working people. Nevertheless, it is expected that man should support the family financially at least as much as the woman does. It is expected that man should protect and solve all problems. In my opinion, the presumption of masculinity may cause the psychological pressure on both genders. Under such social pressure and conditions of high unemployment rate, men can easily break down. They lose self-esteem and give up. Moreover, women with absence of strong men should work for two and carry all duties. They become breadwinners, taking care of children and the unemployed husbands, solve all troubles and dream about "the strong man's shoulder". Many women are seeking for stability and security in relationships.

Angela and Alina told about their negative experiences of marriage with their menfolk. As a main negative feature of their husbands, they mentioned irresponsibility towards the family obligations: they were not capable of taking care of their families financially.

Angela: *“My ex-husband had nothing. I was very romantic. I thought that the most important was love and everything would come later. We lived with my mother in a two-room apartment; he had no permanent job, just some temporary jobs, then he gave in on getting a job and quit working completely. All day long, he was lying on a sofa and was watching TV. I was working; my mother was working and we were looking after him. I have had a hard time. I was worn out. Therefore, this time I was not considering to get married with a man who had nothing”.*

Alina: *“My husband was concentrated only on himself. We were both working but he did not prioritize family needs, just his own. When I gave birth, I could not work. Maternity money is very small in Ukraine. A person cannot live even one week on it. I had to move to the village to my grandmother because we had no money to buy any food...When I started to work, I returned to the city with my son. After some time, I learned that he was saving all his money and he bought a hang-glider”.*

The rest of the informants who used to be married in Ukraine or had long-term relationships told similar stories. They called local men immature and irresponsible. They wanted to have strong, reliable relations with stability, in which man and wife would take care of each other.

Thus, disappointed in their menfolk, and in conditions of economic instability, women tried their luck at the marriage market.

5.3. The story of Lidia, Janna, Marina, Natalia, Raisa and Angela

5.3.1. Internet matchmaking

Cross border internet dating became very popular all over the world. There are hundreds of advertisements of bridal sites. They promise to men and women of different nationalities to find their soul mate around the globe. Many sociologists' studies show that dating online became widely spread and socially accepted. Certainly, internet dating has its benefits. A person can sort candidates according to character features, choose among many at the same time. A person does not need to make an effort and to go out in hope of meeting someone, there is much more certainty in online dating with provided data base of lonely hearts. Moreover, it seems so convenient when you are so busy. Ukrainian women are not an exception. It happened so, that the collapse of the Soviet Union and collectivistic propaganda promoted concentration on individualistic needs and personal happiness; it became a new

cultural context. Yet, unemployment, low standards of living, a sense of hopelessness and a desire to live better developed a market of matchmaking agencies and promoted a new trend among women: to get married to a foreigner. Image of a rich west attracted many women from post-soviet countries. A foreigner from a developed country has higher status in comparison to *average* Ukrainian candidate. I think the reason is that, like in any traditional society, Ukrainian women are family oriented. They are looking for a traditional relationship where dating leads to marriage with expectations of adherence. Most women want to have children. Woman wants to have a family with a male who can provide security and economic stability.

I may assume that some women register themselves on such dating sites just to get attention, while the majority does this with a clear goal; to get married. One such international bridal agency, which works with women from post-soviet countries, claims that 50% of their members are Ukrainians¹⁸. Moreover, most of them are searching for men from Europe, Scandinavia and USA. To get married with a foreigner is their dream. Different language and cultural differences do not hinder them from that decision. Many of them are seeking love, support from prospective husband and stability and they have trust in countries with high living standards, and hope that they would have better opportunities for self-realization in the job market.

The mate selection became one of the researched aspects in international marriages. Khatib-Chadili, Hill & Paton (1998:49) suggested that the majority of people prefer to find a spouse inside their social group, and only a minority tend to enter the cross-cultural marriage. They investigated marriages of twenty women from different countries who decided to get married to English men. Their findings indicated that women that choose a foreign husband have several characteristics in common. These women were more “adventurous, liberal, experimenting and freethinking than the majority” (Khatib-C., Hill & Paton, 1998:63). Ann Baker Cotrell in her study of cross-cultural marriages in India concluded that a feeling of marginality plays as a “push” factor for women to marry a foreigner. In her research she argued that “People who marry out are, to some degree, psychologically, culturally, or socially marginal; at least they are not “dead center” (As cited in Khatib-C., Hill & Paton 1998:43). This definitely is applicable for women from my interviews. *Five* of my informants started their “blind date” in the internet. They told that they wanted to try something new in

¹⁸<http://lifenews.ru/news/131241>

their life and they needed changes. This may characterize them as “adventurous, liberal, experimenting and freethinking”. In my case, women could not build relations inside their society, and it worked as a “push” factor for them. Four of them had a certain agenda, to find a future husband, to create family and to leave Ukraine:

Marina: *“I wanted to marry a foreigner...because I thought foreigner should be more gentle and nice and I wanted economic stability”. By the time I went to visit Harald (made up name) I already had some feelings for him.”*

Lidia: *“I wanted to meet a foreigner. I had an idea about nice, soft man, romantic man who knows how to make a woman feel happy”.*

All women mentioned one factor: that a foreigner, in their opinion, is a “nice, polite and responsible man”. These are the features, which women in my research could not find in men in their local environment. Such an image makes foreigners look very different from Ukrainian men, and being a foreigner becomes a very attractive quality in itself. Khatib-C., Hill & Paton suggested, that people, who do not have a feeling of belonging to their native society and rejecting its norms or culture, have the feeling of “otherness” (Khatib-C., Hill & Paton, 1998:58). In such case, foreigners who are the representatives of other cultures are perceived as “others” as well. This makes them more attractive for women and to consider an outlander as marriage partner becomes more appealing both “for those whose marginality has been a painful experience and for those in whom it did not cause distress. For the former it holds out the prospect of being able to distance themselves from elements in their own culture which they do not like” (Khatib-C., Hill & Paton, 1998:62).

Thus, European men are associated with economic stability, good manners, and such marriage gives the opportunity to leave the country of origin and the conditions in which the woman feels marginalized. Hence, it is necessary to stress that none of my informants wanted to have a “fake marriage”. All of them wanted to have real relations, with real feelings, as Giddens called it “pure relation”. Such relations have the following characteristics: “social relations that is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it” (Giddens 1992:21).

Raisa: *“I was registered on one of those sites. I chose him among others because he was funny, nice, was giving me compliments and made me feel an attractive woman. I liked him.”*

Janna: *“We were internet friends for two years. I wanted to find a strong, nice, independent, intellectual and sexually attractive man. He was like that. We went for a vacation together and fell in love with each other.”*

5.3.2. Setting Priorities for a family start

All eight women told in their interviews that they wanted to have a strong family union, support and economic stability. All three factors were equally important in the mate selection process. Hence, as their answers revealed, the factor of stability both economic and emotional were equally important. Their second priority was children and “to live happily ever after”. Thirdly, a vague dream about integration into the job market was significant as well.

Poor economic conditions and doubts about tomorrow have a big impact on what happens today. The subjects of my interviews mentioned two important factors that they were looking for in their future spouses: love and stability.

According to social exchange theory, exchange process motivates behavior of individuals, and each action has its motives. Thus, each person wants to maximize the benefits of outcome with minimum costs in their relations. This theory’s assumptions are in line with my findings. Women’s narratives clearly showed that they see straight correlations between economy and relations. Women are willing to invest themselves in hope of happy relations. In other words, planning to marry a man from a developed country is similar to making a long-term project. Despite the uncertainties that the future holds, they make a rational choice; take a chance by leaving their entire life behind, and moving to a new country with new rules, culture and opportunities.

Bourdieu (1987: 64; 2002) compared a marriage strategy to a card game, where the purpose of the game is to maximize the advantages. Women’s attraction was motivated mostly by the men’s nationality, financial and social assets; nevertheless, the women based their union on romantic feelings. That is, true love justified the motives of their attraction. Ergo, in my opinion, their rational choice does not contradict with Giddens’ theory about “true love”, because economic stability surely contributes to a better life. According to Parker-Pope (2010:20), until recently matrimony was “an economic and social institution”. During the last

hundred years, with improving economic conditions and feminist movements, women joined the work force in increasing numbers; thus, traditional understanding of family and relations changed radically. This led to reconceptualization of the traditional family contract. People began to seek for a partner, a soul mate and women are less likely to marry for economic support. Since Ukraine is going through a transition period from collective to Western, individualist values, traditional gender roles still prevail, as a layer or basis under women's wants and dreams. Women want security, but they also want personal and emotional fulfillment. Ergo, *Angela, Natalia, Lidia, Marina, Raisa and Janna* were looking for foreign husbands. They expressed a desire to be fulfilled emotionally, to have a stable family, and a husband who would provide a decent life for their children. Norway was a random choice for all of my informants: *"It just happened so"*.

Angela: *"Naturally, woman chooses a male who could be able to support her financially and provide with all necessities when is giving birth and cannot work. They [foreigners] are more stable economically. For family life, it is important"*.

Natalia: *"I wanted to get married with a foreigner. I did not think about a Norwegian in particular, just happened like that. I did not want to live in Ukraine. I wanted economical and financial stability; this makes a positive influence on family relationships. I wanted my child to be born in a country with stability"*.

Lidia told that after unsuccessful relations she was attracted by advertisement of one of the match making sites: *"I saw the advertisement: Caring and attractive husbands from Scandinavia. So I registered myself."*

Raisa: *"I wanted to marry a foreigner. I was a lone mother, and it is almost impossible to get married in my country if you already have a child. In addition, I was fed up with instability, low salary, and impolite people."*

Marina and Janna told similar stories. They have also registered on such sites and met their future husbands there. As they have told me, romantic words, compliments and signs of attention attracted them.

5.3.3. Initial attraction

Ukrainian psychologist and expert coach in UNDP¹⁹ in gender politics Olga Karaseva argues that Ukrainian society is in a transition of gender roles, and social patterns of modern Ukrainian women became very complicated. Gender roles established by gender stereotypes, represent simple and stereotyped conceptions of behavioral patterns of men and women in society, based on traditional norms and expectations²⁰. However, Karaseva also argues that gender roles are not static. They develop under influence of age, class, ethnicity, religion, and geography, political and economic environment. Therefore, men and women might have numerous roles in a socium.

Thus, on one hand the Ukrainian society lives with the gender stereotype of masculine man, breadwinner, and the head of the family. The woman, on the other hand, is pure femininity, with charming weaknesses, so she needs to be taken care off.²¹ On the other hand, globalization brought transmission of ideas, meanings and values and cultural norms became interwoven and intermingled in highly complex ways. When Ukrainian culture adopted new gender roles due to economic, social and political transformation, the position of woman became ambivalent. In the new economic context, she balances between the desire of being weak and tender and the necessity to be strong, ambitious and independent.

A foreign husband is expected to provide economic stability, so woman will not need to play the role of breadwinner. Then she can become feminine, weak and tender again.

As it is expected in our society (in Ukraine), the man should make the first step. The most common and successful way of grooming is when a man expresses his attraction to a woman with compliments and invitations out (where he pays). Then the man buys presents. Woman takes this as serious intentions. The more expensive gift the man gives the more serious intentions he has. In other words, the man should impress the woman and conquer her. These are the unwritten rules in Ukraine. If he does not do so, woman may understand that she is not so important for him. As we say, “as much man invests in woman as much he loves her”. We convert our feelings into material things.

Natalia told about the initial attraction to her future spouse:

¹⁹United Nations Development Program in Ukraine

²⁰<http://medstrana.com/articles/2704/>

²¹<http://japsix.ru/psihologiya-devushek/>

“When he saw how I washed his socks by hands, he bought me an automatic washing machine! Can you imagine what it meant at that time? Not everybody could afford it in Ukraine. All my friends were coming to look at it. They envied me, and such attitude made me feel that I was so lucky to meet the right person. I mean I thought that he takes care of me. He will be a good husband. After sometime, he bought me a gold watch. It is in our culture to brag. Everybody asked the question: “is it his present?” I felt very proud. You can imagine!”

Lidia told that her future husband acted as a gentleman and she was impressed by the way how he expressed his feelings to her: *“He was the only man who wrote me a serious letter about his intentions. He was sending flowers to me from here to my country (read: it costs). He acted like a gentleman those days. And I can see it in my son now.”*

Marina, Raisa and Janna told similar stories; they explained how their potential husbands expressed their feelings.

5.3.4. Expectations, hopes and outcomes in Norway

Thus, Natalia, Marina, Lidia, Janna, Raisa and Angela were attracted to Norwegian men because of gifts and compliments. They perceived it as an evidence of strong feelings. Consequently, Norwegian boyfriends turned into romantic and wealthy representatives of their state and could possibly boost up women’s expectations for a new life. The irony of this situation is that none of the subjects took into consideration the context of different culture. As anthropologists Gupta and Ferguson stated “...Tension may arise when places that have been imagined at the distance must become lived spaces. Places after all, are always imagined in the context of political-economic determinations that have the logic of their own” (Gupta, Ferguson, 1997:42).

As evidence to this statement, all informants who planned to get married to men from abroad told that their expectations from life in Norway were challenged dramatically and dreams of easy and wealthy life were ruined.

Natalia: *“How I imagined life abroad was challenged. There was no manna²² here.”*

²² Manna from heaven is expression from Bible. We use as expression if we talk about easy life with no effort.

Raisa: *“I thought if I move abroad, it would be a different life, happy, with no troubles and a lot of money. You know, we have such stereotype about life in Europe. About Scandinavia I had a certain image, like beautiful and rich country with nice people.”*

Marina: *“I thought I was coming to the country with a high life standard and high human values. So I was expecting a high life standard, life with no tension and some new opportunities.”*

The story of Lidia, Janna and Angela is different. They did not mention about their economic expectations in the new country. Lidia told that she knew about the poor financial condition of her husband and she left economic stability and financial independence for the sake of her dream about the strong family and possible children. Janna told that she did not plan to leave Ukraine at all, but fell in love and decided to try life in Norway.

For Angela the most important criteria in choosing her spouse were his personal features, and the presence of the own house. She dreamt about comfort and place where her future children can live. During our interview session, I asked her if her expectations were justified. Unlike the rest of informants, she did not dispute about life in Norway in general, yet she gave clear answers based on her feelings towards the family.

Angela: *“Yes. All my expectations were justified. I am sure in my husband. What I was expecting, I have it”.*

5.3.5. Integration Challenges

All of my informants answered the question *“why did you come to Norway?”* The answers clearly indicated the desire to immigrate to another country; hence, Norway was a random choice. Six of eight women were seeking higher quality life standard, financial security and better life for their children. Two subjects had different reasons, one came to visit her mother and stayed to study, another came as an au pair and stayed in the country to obtain new university degree.

After the resettlement, the adaptation to the new life starts with a process of acculturation, which includes the integration into the new culture, alternatively ends in separation from it (Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret & Ward, 2002).

During the adaptation, immigrants have to adjust themselves to the new cultural and social conditions. Many scholars on immigration and integration studies defined the process of adaptation as “fitting in” to the rules and conditions of the new society. Participation in working and social life and the feeling of satisfaction are two main aspects of integration. Sociocultural adaptation is based on social and economic integration. Economic integration means that immigrants will work and support themselves and will not be dependent on the system. Psychological adaptation indicates the level of their satisfaction and acceptance of the new environment (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001:105).

The first challenge on the way to social and economic integration that all informants met was the program for foreign people in Norwegian language and culture. Now, I will explain why it was a challenge.

None of my informants had a certain plan on how they should start the integration process and had no knowledge about how the system is working here. As our conversation revealed, everything should “just” happen. They would “just” learn the language and would “just” start working according to their professional skills obtained in Ukraine.

For example, Marina worked as an engineer for the last twenty years before she came to Norway. She considered herself as a professional with high competence. She believed that her education and professional skills would increase her chances to find a job easily. In addition, it seemed natural to her that her husband should wait while she would be ready to enter the job market and he should cover all expenses while she would study.

Marina: *“I thought I would start working according to my occupation and would have good salary. In Ukraine, I worked almost 12 hours a day. I was exhausted. I think it was normal for me to hope for caring husband and that finally I will work as human being, but not as a slave in order to survive”.*

Marina explained her expectations. She was sure that she would find a good job and meanwhile her husband would take care of her. As I have described previously, women in Ukraine wish that their men should take care of his woman. This includes moral, physical and financial support. Man should help to solve all problems in the family.

My informants came to the new country with their framed cultural views and mentality and were not prepared for the specific social conditions in the new society, because they had no

knowledge about it. They had certain behavioral expectations from their spouses based on Ukrainian gender patterns. Such expectations “is a part of a complex psychological process whereby men and women adopt varying degrees of traditionally masculine and feminine roles and responsibilities” (Cinamon, 2011).

For example, Natalia did not have a specific plan on economic integration. Hence, she was sure that her husband would help her to find a job, because he had connections, but her expectations failed.

Natalia: *“Nobody is going to help you to build your life [here]... There, if you have connections it can make life easier. For example, my husband is from a well-known family. He has connections. However, he never used it to help me to find a job... He believes that I have to manage myself on the job market. I have experienced much more stresses here than at home...”*

Obviously, Natalia was not ready to face such state of affairs where she literally should start a new life. She accounted on help and protection by her husband. He refused to use his connections to provide his wife with a job. She should manage everything alone. For a person who moves to another country and starts a new life from zero, it is a big psychological shock, especially if women have Ukrainian traditional preconceptions about the gender roles and the role of the husband.

My interviews showed that women faced a disappointment in marriage as well as in the system in general. Much research shows that the personality and identity of women in exile necessarily involves comprehensive changes, and all of them experience a deep moral dilemma during integration into a new society.

Mutual misunderstanding between spouses arises on the stage when women face the integration processes both on economic and social level. Each culture has key codes, which can be misinterpreted if a person does not have knowledge about it. Thus, in order to understand the mechanism of Norwegian society and place of woman here, we have to look back into 1978 when Norway adopted a Gender Equality Act which prohibits discrimination based on sex, obliged all public institutions to promote gender equality in all areas of policy, such as labor, education, and health. In 1981, the plan was revised and a number of measures encouraged both genders to receive education and employment on an equal footing. It is

scientifically proved that participation of women in education and economy life makes a positive impact on the economy of the country. The concept of women's empowerment became studied and discussed during the last thirty years. The strategy of empowerment is widely promoted in the "welfare state" like Norway. As Alzola and Marino argued, "women's empowerment has become the central axis of the gender perspective and represents a strengthening of the social, economic and political positions of woman, and it involves the strengthening of their health" (as cited in Herrero, 2015: 37).

The Ukrainian women who I am writing about are representatives of a different cultural and social reality. Their identity discourses positioned with norms of collectivistic society or society in transition, yet not the individualistic one. Thus, in the context of collectivistic understanding of the family concept, the individualistic perspective on women's empowerment can cause the opposite effect. It may lead to woman's disempowerment, depression, and sense of helplessness. As the dialog with informants showed, their husbands did not want to get involved in their difficulties on the job market, language learning and social integration. Their wives considered such attitudes as ignorance and indifference.

Much research on migrant women show that the husbands are a valuable resource for integration into the new society, and to adopt a new social role often becomes a traumatic experience with significant consequences. House and Kahn argued, "Those who give us emotional support are the ones we also turn to for instrumental aid, information, and affirmation or appraisal". Thus, the support of the husbands may seem as the first stage of social support in the new society and "one of the most important potential benefits of marriage" (House, Kahn, 1986: 598). Vega, Kolody & Valle (1986) argue that newly arrived immigrant women are socially marginal because of social isolation, cultural and language barriers and have less "coping resources". Thus, the social support which husbands should provide, and confident relations inside the family, such as being reliable, supportive, patient and caring are highly correlated with women's psychological health and feeling of inclusion.

My interviews showed the women's views on the new reality. They explained that instead of social support, some husbands wanted to take advantage of their poor knowledge about the new society and to take total control over their lives. For example, Marina, Raisa and Jana told that their husbands were always misleading them with wrong information about the Norwegian system, refused to help and were trying to control them in everything.

Marina: *“My English was poor and I felt very helpless here in the beginning. I was feeling shy because of my language skills and he was always misleading me with information about my rights here. He was just taking advantage of my situation. For example, he could say that in Norway is forbidden to speak any other language than Norwegian. I could not invite my friends, he did not allow me to go out with them and after school, and I should go home directly. I think he wanted to control me in everything and when he could not, he was getting angry.”*

Raisa told that her husband never tried to make her feel comfortable in the new country. He did not help her to socialize with people but just opposite; she was not allowed to have friends and was getting angry if she was talking on the phone.

Raisa: *“...He appeared to be greedy, sullen, surly man... He always reminds me that I live in his house, so I have no rights and he has all rights. He never helps. I solve all my problems myself I never felt support or care from him.”*

Lidia told that her dreams and hopes were broken very soon after their wedding. Her husband was not trying to be supportive, just opposite, he made a distance between them and left Lidia alone in the most difficult psychological moment for woman during pregnancy and after giving birth.

Lidia: *“I was very disappointed... I met misunderstanding, lack of emotional support and both moral and financial discrimination. We had no communication... when our son was 1 year old, he asked for divorce. I felt myself misused. And I felt myself broken.”*

Janna: *“When I arrived here as his wife, I liked everything here...Later... he forbade me to read and talk my language... He was checking my phone... He appeared to be very jealous. He said that in his opinion a woman should have no rights like in Afghanistan and if she refuses from sex she should be punished and that woman should live only for serving a man...He began to get angry because my understanding expended and he was not the only source of the information about Norwegian traditions and what I was learning and observing differed a lot from what he presented to me”.*

The women experienced disappointment in their husbands. Feeling of helplessness and lack of knowledge also led to disappointment in the Norwegian system in general.

Women's empowerment is always on the agenda of the Norwegian government. Nevertheless, to achieve empowerment for immigrants is not as easy as it seems. Herrero (2015: 37) argues, "Empowerment is a personal process, each woman has to empower herself, but society in all its dimensions should encourage a favorable arena and grant the possibilities for this process to unfold". For immigrant women it means that firstly, they need to be introduced to a new culture and be integrated into it, in order to develop personally and professionally.

Thus, the plan on successful integration made newly arrived wives being financially dependent on their husbands the first year. As my interviews showed, not all husbands were ready to support financially their wives. They saw it as challenge in their marriage. They did not want to provide financial help. Some were saying directly to their wives that they should start working; some just cut their pocket money. Women had no choice and began looking for any job in order to have their own money.

Raisa: "... He did not want to drive me and did not give me money for the bus ticket... He asked in a few places if they need a cleaner, he received positive answer...and said to me that I can start earning my own money".

Janna: "We had always conflicts about money...He acted like a fanatic about money. Later I understood that he was helping me so much so I would learn the language faster, would find a job faster, and would not ask him for anything. He helped me to find the job from the very beginning. I was working in his sisters' café and earning money, so I was paying for my phone bills and had my own pocket money".

Marina: "When I did not have the job yet, he was giving me 50 krona a day as pocket money. So sometimes, I had not enough time to make sandwiches for myself, or money on my bus card was finished, and then I had to spend those 50 NOK in the bus and was staying hungry the whole day. He did not care. When I was telling him about how I felt being hungry without money he was just laughing like it was a good joke".

Angela: "The first year when I arrived I was financially dependent on my husband. I felt very unpleasant about it... In the food stores, he was tensed and looked unhappy after paying. ...He was stressed about spending money...with my mentality I believed that man should spend money on his woman. It is normal for us. I felt unpleasant that he was so greedy. He was

buying only necessary things but not more than that. He did not give me pocket money as well”.

Thus, the integration into the Norwegian society led to confrontation of “internet wives” with their menfolk on economic basis. Women were not familiar with the Norwegian life style where both parts are running the expenses on an equal footing. With lack of knowledge, they faced a moral dilemma; their traditional understanding of gender roles was challenged by the reality of modern Norway. The researcher and the Council on Contemporary Families Stephanie Coontz suggested, “Modern men tend to want mates who are on similar level in terms of education or earnings potential” (Coontz, 2005:286). Consequently, the clash of two cultural identities produced a long-term conflict inside each family.

“The Government’s goal is that as many people as possible will complete the education and/or training they want”.²³ Nevertheless, my interviewees characterized the opportunity for integration provided by Government as ambiguous. On one hand, it provides necessary language skills, and on the other hand, women do not meet necessary understanding and patience of their husbands. Thus, women who had a plan of self-realization in career should grab any opportunity to work in order to survive and cover their basic needs.

Thus, Marina and Janna who are educated engineers with work experience from Ukraine began to work in elderly house after participation in the health care course on the introductory program. Angela, who has MA in pedagogy, began to clean in a ferryboat. Natalia, who has MA in English and German linguistics started to work in a hotel. Raisa, who has degree as archivist and librarian began to clean food stores and houses.

5.3.6. Sociocultural adaptation and domestic violence

Integration on the social level includes the feeling of satisfaction, motivation and control over her or his life. Satisfaction includes many different elements as well. To be satisfied a person needs to be in good health, feel safe and feel secure in the new society. One of the prerequisites to feel confidence and trust in the new society is to have knowledge about this society, to know how the system works, and respect the rules of the host society (Kaya, 2010: 7-36).

²³The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-20030704-080-eng.pdf>

The report *Enhelhetligintegreringspolitikk – mangfoldogfelleskap* presents the frameworks in order to develop society “where all people feel they belong within the Norwegian community and trust the authorities and each other”²⁴. According to this White paper, the integration of immigrants starts with participation in the labor market. Obviously, entering the labor market means to empower the woman, make her financially independent and to develop professional skills. In my opinion, this simple model of integration does not always have positive impact on immigrant women. As my interviews showed, the internet wives were employed as unskilled in low-status jobs with no promotion perspectives.

In addition to the obligation to participate in the introductory program and work in the evenings, they had to put effort to organize and manage a household as well. Women in their stories told that the first year of life in the new country was a dramatically hard life experience. Their expectations were not met, and they faced a lot of misunderstandings and ignorance by their husbands. They told that the most difficult was to combine the role of wife, student and to be at work simultaneously. My interviewees described their feelings as an emotional shock.

Marina: *“I tried to be a good wife. I was doing everything in good faith according to my understanding as to how a woman should act. I was making food, cleaning, ironing; I was doing everything at home and was trying my best to make him happy”.*

Lidia: *“I thought it was very normal to look after the baby day and night plus doing the whole domestic work alone at the same time. I was studying Norwegian cuisine from internet, was trying to cook the best and delicious food for him, just to make him happy. Because you know how we say, the way to man’s heart is through his stomach. I wanted to feed him good, I wanted him to come to a clean and nice house. Later, I realized that I was only exhausting myself”.*

Raisa: *“Every day I was cooking, cleaning, ironing, and looking after the house and garden. For me it was normal because I considered it as my duty since I am a woman, and I wanted my husband to look neat, clean and ironed.”*

These women had great tensions caused by external and internal factors. On one hand, they had to participate in the integration program in order to learn the language and enter the labor

²⁴https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/bld/ima/integreringsmeldinga2012_nou2011_14_bedre_integrering/bld_integreringsmelding_mangfold_netts_kort_versjon.pdf

market, and on the other hand, they had to perform alone domestic duties, since they felt it was their gender role and their husbands did not show enthusiasm to share the housework. My informants pointed out that in the beginning of their family life they did not expect their husbands to share the housework, because they considered it as “women’s sphere”. When I talked to Angela, she explained to me that she never questioned if they have had equal rights in the family. In her opinion, each of them had different areas of responsibility. Then, there would be no need to intrude into each other’s spheres and to give advices concerning it.

Angela: *“Hmmm... I never questioned myself about it [equality in the family]. What do you mean by equal rights? He does not oppress me; at home, we have different scopes. He never intrudes into the kitchen business, for example. I never intrude into something what he is good at. I will never give him advice about how to repair the car or deal with electricity”.*

Marina, Lidia and Raisa had the same view on the sharing of tasks. They told that in the beginning of their marriage they were just taking care of the family. In their opinion, it was natural. All they wanted in return was an appreciation from their husbands, their love and respect. In spite of that, in return their husbands showed manipulation and aggression towards their women. Internet wives told that instead of showing appreciation, their men folk wanted to have total control over them, became aggressive and began to treat them only as servants.

Marina: *“I had no time to rest and to sleep enough. After the courses, I was going to work... directly. Then I was coming home... about 10 p.m. The only thing I wanted to do was to have dinner and to go to sleep. My husband thought that after work I had to do house work. He began to complain to his friends...that I do not want to do anything in the house. I was doing housework on weekends...that was not enough for him. He decided that I should not rest at all, and asserted that it was a Norwegian rule; woman should do everything. And if I wanted to live here I would have to follow the rules”.*

Lidia: *“He never tried to help, and I never asked for it. Moreover, the period of pregnancy coincided with the period of my adaptation to the new place. I got pregnant right after we got married. That was very hard, I was sick all the time, I depended on my husband in everything; language, emotionally, financially. In addition, I was homesick. After our son was born, I was still doing everything alone. I was waking up at nights, never had time to sleep during the day, I was always busy with some stuff: cooking, cleaning, and ironing and so on. In one year, I was worn out. We began to argue a lot because I was always irritated. At the same time, I*

had to go to the Norwegian program on integration. After one year, he wanted to divorce and threw me out of the house”.

Raisa: *“I do not think he really needed a wife. He needed a private servant who would clean, cook, iron, and look after the garden and do washing as well. Once he told me that it was enough that he was buying the food. It was like a slap in the face for me. He did not appreciate anything of that I was doing”.*

Janna: *“He did not let me to relax. I was working and studying. It was very hard for me. I needed to rest when I came home. When I was at home he was turning the TV on the full volume, if I was went to another room, he was just coming, talking, making noise, I had no place at home where I could just take a nap or just relax. Everything went wrong. He had no empathy”.*

These interviews showed that the period of adaptation to the new culture appeared to be psychologically and physically difficult for my interviewees. None of the parties took into consideration the aspect of different culture of their spouses. Just on the surface, Ukrainian and Norwegian cultures may look similar. As Lidia mentioned in her interview, she did not think that there was a big cultural difference between Norway and Ukraine.

“We eat almost the same food, we dress in the same way, there is much more difference between Africans and Norwegians, than between us”.

Nevertheless, we are products of different systems, and the ideology of collectivistic and individualistic traditions is totally different. A research on social psychological phenomena in collective and individualistic cultures showed that in order to see the difference between cultures, it should be analyzed on psychological level. Thus, cultural differences are measured in the dimension of personality and named as allocentrism and idiocentrism. Allocentrism correlates with social support, and idiocentrism correlates with “emphasis on achievement” and “perceived loneliness” (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai & Lucca 1988). This statement explains the misunderstandings inside Norwegian- Ukrainian families. Marina described their relations in family as such: *“Our relations were like a one-way street.”*

Women expected that the family relations should be equally important for their husbands; and that they should put the same effort for their happiness and sometimes sacrifice their own interests. Because the essential attribute of allocentric individuals toward the in-group (or

family) have “highly costly demands”. This means that in cultures with collective identity the benefit of family comes first (Bredal, 2006:91).

Romano recommends to couples who have an intension to marry cross- culturally, “to find out as much as possible about the background, family and culture of the future spouse before getting married” (as cited in Kohn, 1988: 142). None of my informants attempted to do that. They obtained only the basic information about Norway and planned to base their lives on initial attraction.

Therefore, the first year of their marriage finalized with tension and conflicts inside their families. Financial dependence, lack of moral support, discrimination inside the family led to that point when women began to lose moral satisfaction and began to lose emotional attachment to their husbands. Four of my respondents stated that their husbands, their closest people in this country began to insult, abuse and humiliate them. It happened when women obtained knowledge about the system, their rights and began to speak Norwegian language. Most of them were starting to have jobs. At this stage of social and economic integration, the escalation of the family conflicts reached the highest point. Janna told that she had many questions about the rules and traditions here. Moreover, she wanted to get the answers from their Norwegian teacher. She explained that she did not have trust in her husband anymore, and wanted to hear a different opinion on how the society is constructed here.

Marina, Raisa and Lidia told that after they learned the language and faced different reality from what their husbands represented to them, they became more experienced, at the same time they got much more conflicts inside the family. Lidia told that her husband began to accuse her of being a bad wife, sour and fat. Marina told that they had disputes every day. Her husband was insulting her personally, her culture and country. He started to throw her things into the garbage when she was not at home, and was making rumors about her among his friends.

Janna told that after one year she got to know her husband much better and that what she found out about him differed from the man she was dating and married. They had more and more conflicts each day.

Later Janna told that he was limiting her personal freedom, he did not let her to go anywhere alone, was checking her phone and e-mail.

Janna: *“He began to harass me. Everything had to be, as he wanted it to be. He did not let me sleep in a different room. He was just coming and dragging me to the bedroom. We had physical confrontation. I began to be scared of him. He is almost two meters high and over 100 kg. I am 160 cm and 50 kg; he was just twice bigger than I was and obviously stronger. He began to act like a psychopath. He was always irritated. Psychologically, physically and emotionally he completely oppressed me”.*

He prohibited her from watching Russian channels and reading Russian books, and he was against her meeting friends as well. Marina and Raisa told similar stories; their husbands were strongly against any social contacts and Russian language was prohibited at home. Raisa could not talk her language even to her son when the husband was around. Marina told that her husband even began to demand her salary:

“Once he came home and said that I had to transfer my salary to his bank account. He said all wives in Norway do that. I refused and he got pissed. At that time, I was already sharing expenses for the house and food. Nevertheless, he wanted all my money. I think he did not like to lose control over me”.

Adaptation and integration into the new society was a difficult period in the women’s life. They faced constant violation of their human rights inside their families. “Each individual has singular and personal interpretation of particular human rights principles, and similarly decide the extent to which they will apply these principles to their own life” (Maouldi, 1985: 215). Unfortunately, not all of my informants had an opportunity to apply such principles because of the desire of husbands to have total control and their aggression. They could not satisfy their simple natural needs such as to rest after work or study, to eat without being insulted, to talk their language and to socialize with friends. Their personal boundaries were violated. Conflicts in the family, feeling of being alone and feeling of being a foreigner gave them the feeling of separation and exclusion.

5.3.7. Is it worth the costs to marry a foreigner?

Losses

In my interviews, I asked all eight women, “Is it a challenge to be married to a Norwegian?” Four of eight informants stated that challenges in marriage do not depend on nationality but it depends on the personality of the spouse. The other four informants indicated that to be

married to a Norwegian man they perceived as a challenge. I asked them to remember when they realized that it was a challenge and if they considered returning home. This question brought them on a monologue about advantages and disadvantages of their marriage, their loss and gains. Researches from Victoria University of Wellington in their study on Problems of psychological and sociocultural adaptation among Russian-speaking immigrants in New Zealand investigated losses and gains of immigrants on the way to their adaptation. The category of “loss” they divided on “loss of self-fulfillment and loss of the sense of belonging”. Their informants described their feeling of loss connected to their work accomplishments in their country of origin, social status and life satisfaction. The loss of sense of self-belonging, they perceived as differences in culture and moral values and loss of social networks (Maydell-S., Masgoret & Ward, 2007). The findings of this research were very relevant and similar to my data results. Making the analyses of Ukrainian interviewees, I could see that in respect to the “loss” category, my informants felt to be “cut off” from their natural environment. It was difficult for them to establish new networks and they did not obtain the feeling of “being at home”.

Raisa: *“I feel myself cut from my country and environment which I was used to. In the beginning, it was difficult to communicate because I did not know English and did not know Norwegian at all. It is difficult to describe your feelings without the language and the offence inside just grows...”*

The rest of the informants except Diana expressed the same feelings. From the beginning, it was difficult to accept new norms and life style, it seemed “*strange*”, and for Marina it was even “*irritating the way people were dressed*”. All eight women experienced discrimination at home or at work or in the social services; and felt that the society is hostile to them. Marina told that she met an aggressive attitude towards her in NAV when she came to apply as a job seeker as engineer.

Marina: *“She told me that such jobs are only for Norwegians and for me she can propose cleaning job...”*

Ahmadi (2008) argues that the discrimination and underestimation of immigrants is leads to their marginalization and separation from the host society. Unhealthy psychological environment and unacceptance gives a feeling of being disparaged and demoralized. All of

my informants, in different stages of life, experienced same feelings. Until now in their interviews, they used the terminology as “we” (Ukrainians) and “they” (Norwegians).

Gains.

The segregation on “us” and “them” is creating barrier which is difficult to overcome. As a result, immigrants lose their trust in the new society and what they gain is only the feeling of isolation, pain and depression (Ahmadi 2008:51). The research on Russian-speaking immigrants in New Zealand found out that despite the negative experience of women, there are positive gains. They indicated three categories of such gains. It was “Family reunion, safety and security, and human freedoms” (Maydell-S., Masgoret & Ward, 2007). The last subcategory was not an issue in my interviews. All eight women mentioned that safety and security was the reason to leave their country. Six of them involved themselves in cross-cultural marriages to find economic and social security, later they obtained their residence permit because of family reunion with their spouses. Five of my informants indicated that they do/did not feel happy in their relations. Natalia described her life as “*boring*”. Marina, Jana and Lidia called the life with their husbands “*a nightmare*”. Raisa said the family life is just a “*routine*”.

Raisa: *“It is just a routine. I have to say that this marriage gave me no opportunities; but it was an opportunity for my son. And I am grateful that he took me with a child and did not divorce till now”.*

In the conclusion, I asked my informants if they ever considered returning home. All women gave negative answers. Natalia as well as Raisa is concerned about opportunities for their children and they believe that father can provide them with “good life”. My respondents said that Norway is their “*home now*” and they feel here stability and economic security. They perceived this fact as an advantage and told that in Ukraine they could never be sure about the next day. Nevertheless, women in unhappy marriages admitted that emotionally they felt happier in their country of origin.

Despite the visible advantages, six of my informants did not want to admit that they gained from their moving to Norway. During our conversation sessions, I often heard “at home...I had friends...I felt happier...and here...” Such attitude to the life position Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret & Ward (2007) explained as “the balance between perceived gains and losses” and

in how a person evaluates her own success in the process of adaptation. I have already described the obstacles in adaptation processes, and which problems my informants had to tackle in order to become integrated and to feel on equal footing with the majority of the society. For seven of the women it was a traumatically hard experience. In order to cope with social and psychological difficulties, they distanced themselves from the Norwegian environment.

5.3.8. New social role and coping strategies

Eight of my informants reported that they did not think that to start a new life would be that hard. They believed that psychologically they were ready for difficulties. Nevertheless, interaction with the new culture always causes psychological challenges for individuals when they have to adjust to the new cultural context. My respondents had hoped that it should not be hard to integrate into the job market and into the new society. They expected that their husbands would provide them the necessary psychological, physical and financial support.

Immigrants have to start their lives in the new country from scratch. New comers have to learn the new language, cultural norms with new rules and symbols. Erikson (1970) stated that the “self” changes during the entire life through the constant interaction and engagement with the environment. The idea of Erikson’s self-development is about establishing identity in society and about how to constitute a sense of trust in others. In order to answer the main question of this paper “*What are the crucial factors for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway?*” I want to look deeper at the process of identity transition from the “old” to the “new” cultural self. To understand the psychological condition of women from my research, I would dare to compare their situation to newborn infants. I am basing this comparison on works of Melanie Klein (in Sibley 1995: 5-11) and Julia Kristeva (1982: 60- 66) where they argue that the new born child experiencing comfort and first loving relations from mother which “in the first few months...represents to the child the whole of the external world” (Sibley, 1995:6). They experience both good and bad from the mother. The interaction with the mother is an “earliest experience of social relationships” (Sibley, 1995:6). Of course, women who are over thirty years old can hardly be called infants; yet, I find their situation in the new culture reminiscent, in some respects, to that of a child. They appeared in an alien, unknown environment. None of the internet wives could speak the Norwegian language and four of them could speak only basic English. Absence of language skills and knowledge about the Norwegian society in the first months made them helpless and dependent on their

husbands. Their husbands were the only persons who these women knew in the new country, they were the only people who they loved and were attached to. Thus, continuing the comparison, the husbands in a way imitate infants' mothers with whom babies experience one-ness and learning about the world, bad and good. In the first phase after the women's resettlement husbands are playing the role of mediators between their immigrant wives and Norwegian society. During the first year of adaptation to the new culture six of my informants who came here as wives acknowledged that they met hostile attitude from Norwegians towards them and six of internet wives reported about harassment by their spouses. In their interviews, they openly told how they were mistreated, insulted and battered. Thus, during the adaptation period on the way to build their new personality, women went through all Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial crises: mistrust, shame, guilt, inferiority, confusion, isolation, stagnation and despair.

When the immigrant does not feel trust in the host society, this lack of trust causes rejection of new social order and distances new comers from the majority and causes marginalization, separation from the new reality, unacceptance of new social role and rejection of new "self". According to the interviews, none of internet wives were satisfied with their position in the labor market, they felt that it was humiliating to do low qualified jobs after they have had master's degrees in their country and worked so many years in their proper occupation. The environment at home was worse, wives experienced that they were misused, unappreciated and underestimated by their men folk. Marina and Raisa told in their story that their husbands were insulting them every day.

Marina: *"He called me fat and ugly, was getting angry when I was laughing, when I was talking to my children on the phone. When it was winter and I was cold, he was closing the heating system and was opening the windows. Just to make me feel more miserable".*

Raisa: *"He always tells me that our women are cheap, he always criticizes me and makes me feel a third class people".*

Thus, their new social role with low paid jobs and abusive attitude of their spouses produced a new self-image, which was strongly rejected. It is important to remember that their picture of the world and the social construct was preconditioned by their own culture and stereotypes. Through their life period, they have created a conception of what is right and what is wrong; such perception was built in the context of their native culture. They had a certain image of

family construct, the behavioral patterns of spouses toward each other; they had an image of how their society is constructed, with its gender roles and communication and interaction order. They had a certain image of self-identification. The new degraded image of self in the new cultural context caused a feeling of self-denial. To describe the crisis of identity and separation from the reality, when the person is confused and questions who am “I” and who is “other” Kristeva delegates the notion of abjection. According to Kristeva, abjection is a condition of a subject, which is borderline to horror: “Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A something that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness about which there is nothing significant, and which crushes me” (in Becker-Leckrone 2005: 151). This is a manifestation of horror towards both personal and collective constructs. Such an extreme emotional condition during the adaptation period produces “acculturative stress” and depression (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987). All of my eight informants declared that all of them have experienced the feeling of depression and faced a crisis of identity.

Marina: *“After some time I did not know any more why I am here, and who am I now?”*

Thus, everyday life bustle at school, work and at home created a feeling of disappointment. Actually, disappointment is a scope of negative feelings. Feelings may include diverse amount of emotions. Bitterness may be a main consequence of disappointment, and it can transform into anger, irritation or feeling of revenge. As Ehn and Løfgren have stated, “the feeling of disappointment can get stuck in one’s memory in the form of cultural cicatrization in bitterness that is not an emotion as such, but rather a frame of mind that colors everything else. In bitterness, anger is not only turned inwards but also becomes a filter through which the everyday is experienced and interpreted, expressed as cynism and sarcasm, or in feeling of worthlessness or injustice.” (Ehn, Løfgren, 2007: 111)

Six of my interviewees acknowledged that they are familiar with the feelings named above. They meant that they faced a lot of injustice and that their personality changed.

Janna: *“What do I feel? Broken dreams. Feeling of being misused. I am disappointed that he [husband] did not get any penalty for the violence against me”.*

Raisa: *“I feel it [injustice] all the time...Very often I feel sad. Maybe I am depressed. I have changed here a lot. Now I understand that I was poor but happy at home. I was tired physically [in Ukraine], but now, I am just tired of life...I feel myself emptied”.*

Marina: *“He was insulting me, hurting physically; I left this marriage with no self-respect and no pride”.*

Intellectuals argue that family as well as external factors has a significant influence on women’s life and it can generate both stress and strength (Guruge & Khanlou, 2004). Stephanie Coontz in her book “Marriage, a History” highlights the results of the research on women in unhappy marriages. The research showed that if in the family, a decision-making power is unequal, and wives in marriage are unhappy, it may cause a serious health risk for women. Wives have higher rate of depression and it diminishes their immune system (Coontz, 2005: 310). Six of my informants reported that they did not have equality in their families and their spouses monopolized the decision-making power.

Lidia: *“...he was the leader in the family and I accepted that. Moreover, he had control over everything. I even did not have pocket money (talking more loud and angry). Because he pays for everything. Because we come as bullshit here without money, without anything, starting from zero”.*

Five of my informants stated that they are familiar with the feeling of depression because of unhealthy environment at home. Two of them were under treatment by a psychologist.

Janna: *“I had a very strong depression the whole year before divorce and one year after. I had treatment. I felt myself like in the dead end. I was overloaded with offence, I still had feelings to him, I felt underestimated, I felt that he did not appreciate anything what I have done for him...”*

Vega, Kolody and Valle (1986) argued that newly arrived immigrant women have less “coping resources” because of social isolation, cultural and language barriers. As a measure to cope with psychological problems under the acculturation process, immigrant women from my research have built certain measures. According to the social identity theory when immigrants begin the acculturation process, they will face a dilemma of self-identification at the some point. The question “who am I and to which group do I belong” (Berry, 1997) will eventually occur. In order to secure the feeling of wellbeing, individuals associate themselves with a certain group. The group becomes a part of participant’s life. It may have a positive impact on a person, give her/him the feeling of belonging; and even boost the self-image by comparing this group with others (Sam, Berry, 2010). Thus, Ukrainian women created their

own group while they were participating to the introductory program. They did not organize themselves by personal attraction or by ethnic belonging; they used symbolic interaction, their group was created by language and gender criteria. The language always plays the role of a code; the language is an “idiom of belonging” (Cowan 1997:12). Mother tongue fills people up with trust and confidence. Nelson Mandela once said, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language that goes to his heart²⁵”. All participants spoke fluently the Russian language. My interviewees told me in our conversations, that during breaks between lessons they had a chat in Russian language, which is an “international” on the post-soviet territories. They established friendship with Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks and Lithuanians. All new friends were women, because, according to their words, they were mostly discussing women’s problems.

Marina: *“I have got good friends there. We are friends until now with some of them. Mostly we discussed our husbands. Everybody was complaining. We talked about work, about Norwegians in general. That how they lived seemed so strange”.*

David Sibley argues that stereotypes are necessary for perception of the world. Stereotypes are “images of things we fear and glorify”, and they “make the world secure and stable”, fulfill emotionally and “capture something that has been lost” (Sibley, 1995:14). Ukrainian women began to lose their old identity and obtain a new one while integrating into the new culture. Integration in the new environment always brings changes to individuals’ identity and this challenge the image of self. As so, women in the Russian speaking groups had much in common. First, it was the language. Second, they belonged to the same social category, and they had common interests: they were discussing husbands, who were mistreating them, and who were representatives of the new culture, they were discussing situations when they met unfriendly attitude of local people, comparing the local way of life and traditions to those from their home countries. They produced new stereotypes and supported an anti-Norwegian mood inside the group. In a way, they created a circle with negative attitude, which was creating a gap between immigrant wives and the majority of the population. As Sam and Berry stated, “Psychological group formation occurs through a process of self-categorization in terms of an externally designated group label, and is functional in one or both of two ways. It can fulfill a need for coherence by rendering self- and other-perception predictable and orderly in terms of prescriptive behavioral expectations, and/or it can fulfill a need for

²⁵ "Nelson Mandela." BrainyQuote.com. XploreInc, 2015. 21 October 2015.
<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/n/nelsonmand121685.html>

positive self-esteem by allowing one to construct a social identity which is evaluative positive and maintainable” (Sam, Berry, 2010: 475). As it is seen from the statements, such group creations are necessary for immigrants. It works as a therapy in order to cope with psychological stress. Hence, pumping the self-esteem by not accepting the host society is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it benefits the members’ feeling of belonging and identity. On the other hand, such collective disappointment in the new home country may stick in one’s unconsciousness and frame negative stereotype that hardly can be changed. As a result, it will cause long term side effects, such as unreasonable anger, depression and bitterness (Wulf, 2007:111). Women in my research are clear examples of how stressful the acculturation process can be, and that the coping strategies that they found can be both positive and dangerous for the psychological well-being. Cooperation in such group established an important social network, which gave them necessary psychological support, they shared their problems between each other and they knew that they are not alone in such situation, yet it created a certain distance between them and the host society.

As I have argued previously, the family relations were the main source of stress for my informants. In my interviews, all of the respondents were asked what their coping strategies with conflicts inside the family were. Only one of the internet wives admitted that she tried to solve all conflicts through negotiation. Yet, such method did not give a positive effect.

Janna: *“I tried to talk to him and explain my feelings, but he did not want to listen. He just said that I feel wrong. That is it”.*

Marina, Lidia, Natalia and Raisa told that they did not have a particular method and they did not try to discuss conflicts. Their method was different. At first, they were showing their dissatisfaction in a highly emotional manner and after that, they felt more offended and stopped talking to their spouses at all. So to say, it was a “cold war”.

Lidia: *“I did not have an experience to solve conflicts as Norwegians do: with patience, without emotions, usually I was swallowing everything and crying. Better I would talk and discuss and when Patrick tried to do so, I thought that he was going too deep into unnecessary details and in the end we were fighting more”.*

Natalia explained that she does not have enough patience to discuss problems with her husband.

Natalia: *“Very often he starts to explain why it should be like that and like this. I cannot handle it, it is so boring for me that I am getting annoyed and then I just leave slamming the door. Too many details in his explanations and he starts from so far that I can never wait until he finishes. When we argue he never comes first to me. Me neither. Sometimes we do not talk 2-3 days. Then I start talking first but never come back to the subject. Never discuss it”.*

Angela, unlike the rest of the informants, told that she tried to understand the root of the conflict without talking to her husband.

Angela: *“I think I analyze my feelings a lot. I do not perceive problem just as a reality. I am trying to understand the reasons. As a post- factum, I am glad that I was wise enough not to make conflicts inside the family, because of different mentalities. I understand that my feelings are subjective. If I do not like something because we are used to do differently, it is not the fault of Norwegians; it is my own perception of the reality that differs from the Norwegian perspective. So if I do not like something about their lifestyle, it’s my personal problem and I do not talk loud about it.”*

Angela’s coping strategy was in the dimension of learning. She looked for the root of a conflict. She tried to analyze her feelings and connect them to the situation. As Adler stated, a person learns to know herself better when she experiences a culture. “In the encounter with another culture the individual gains new experimental knowledge by coming to understand the roots of his or her own ethnocentrism and by gaining new perspectives and outlooks on the nature of culture. Paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more learns of oneself” (as cited in Furnham, 1975:22). Thus, conflict situations helped Angela to enlarge the outlook on the culture and traditions of her husband. She began to understand herself better, and the views of her husband on an existing problem without a dialog. She found her coping strategy while reading and learning about the origin of traditions and behavioral patterns of the host society.

These interviews showed that women did not have real strategies to cope with stress inside their families. Coping strategies are often described as an ability of a person to approach the problem and to make an effort to solve it. Regarding the new social role of women in Norway, all informants chose an active strategy; they created their Russian speaking groups. Inside these groups, they felt secure; they felt support and members of the group were equal among each other. They had the same problems, they spoke the same language and they shared the

life views. Concerning the family issues, my informants chose the passive behavior, i.e. “avoidance strategies” (Friedman, 2006:124). They did not make an active effort on solving the problematic issues, yet, they preferred to distance themselves from the stressor.

Ergo, the euphoria from arriving to the imagined “land of gold and honey” disappeared and was transformed into tears, anger and unforgiving bitterness.

5.4. The enquire of Alina and Diana

In this subchapter, I would like to present analyses of interviews with Alina and Diana. I reckon that such segmentation is necessary, because the purpose of their arrival to Norway was unrelated to marriage; as so, their experience, expectations and outcomes were different.

I would like to remind the reader that Alina came to Norway to visit her mother and stayed here as a student. After the study, she planned to go back to her country. However, she began to date a Norwegian man. This circumstance changed her plans about going back to Ukraine, she continued her education and four years later, they got married.

Diana arrived to Norway in year 2004 as au pair. After she achieved her MA degree in Economic Sciences, she realized that she would not have a decent future in her country and she looked for the opportunities to leave Ukraine. She came with the goal to stay in Norway after her contract, as au pair was finished. As so, she enrolled at a university in Norway, graduated and began to work as an economist.

5.4.1. Life in Norway: expectations and outcomes

Alina and Diana, unlike previous respondents, had a different start up in Norway. The purpose of their arrival to Norway had no connection to a love story, and they did not have physical or emotional dependence on a man in this country. They started their integration autonomously and self-reliant. Therefore, the analyses of their interviews will vary, because not all topics of my questionnaire were relevant for them. For example, the matter of “expectations from life in the new country” was an irrelevant subject for Alina. She gave the short answer that she had no expectations because she planned to return home. Hence, Diana explained that she built the image of Norway while she lived in the Norwegian family.

Diana: “...I think I had a certain image of Norway before I arrived. Like you know, a country with high life standard, and so on, but I did not expect that women had so much support and

power. I was an au pair, so I lived inside the Norwegian family, and I saw life from inside. I was lucky to get into a good family, so I was not disappointed in Norway and its system”.

Interview with Diana showed that in Norway she expected to meet high life standards and her expectations were justified. She lived in the Norwegian family and had an opportunity to learn about the culture and traditions from inside.

The purpose of “au-pair program” is cultural exchange. It does not call for integration into the foreign society. The host family is a “cultural ambassador within their own home”, which is supposed to demonstrate the life-style of the new country.

During such experience, the young person does not have the purpose to integrate into the foreign society at all. He/she takes the position of the observer. They look, learn, compare, and saying shortly, they attain cultural experience and expanding their outlook. They do not have every day struggle for recognition in the host society. They come to the family as an “eldest brother/sister” for children, and their duties are prescribed by contract. Working hours should not exceed than five hours a day, should have two days off in a week, the host family should provide food and monthly pocket money. The duty of the young person is to look after children and to help organize every day activities for the children. As so, a person who comes as an au pair and a person who comes as a wife through family reunion, have antipodal startups in Norway. Wives are coming to build their family life and au pair comes to observe and learn about the new culture. The host family, so to say, welcomes them as a guest and helps to pass the “cultural gate”. Wives should find their way and place in the new society; they are experiencing cultural shock under the hardest conditions. Of course, the experience of au pair can be difficult as well. It depends on the family, on the relations with the host, children and so on. Unfortunately, I did not find it necessary during the interview to ask about everyday life in the family. That time I did not think that it would be a relevant question. For example, Diana mentioned that she was lucky and she got into a good family and she had a positive experience. The purpose of the comparison was to show that wives and au pairs come to Norway with different goals and under different conditions.

Thus, Diana obtained knowledge about Norwegian values while living in the Norwegian family. As so, she built her expectations considering the new life accordingly. She lived in the Norwegian family one year, she built good relations with members of the family and they

helped her to establish positive image about the new country. After her contract expired, she enrolled at a university, moved to a new city and began to live as a student.

Alina did not plan to live in Norway, she came to visit her mother and all of a sudden she learned that she was accepted as a student.

Alina: *“My mother...decided to arrange my life. She decided that I have to move here... She translated documents about my graduation, sent them to one of the University Colleges..., and invited my son and me for summer holidays. One week later, she received an admission letter... I did not even consider starting studying here because I had my job at the university in Ukraine. Moreover, I was married. Somehow, she convinced me to try and I agreed. I received a student visa, place in the dormitory and even a student loan that they gave me by mistake, as I have learned next year. So everything worked out well for my starting here.”*

Consequently, Alina and Diana started a new life in Norway as international students.

5.4.2. Integration process and adaptation to a new culture

As a foreign student myself, I can assert that studying abroad and experiencing a foreign culture makes a cogent impression on a person. Professor of Psychology Adrian Furnham in his research on the experience of foreign students in United Kingdom argues that such experience may affect the whole life of a person. Naturally, the practical experience can be both positive and negative. Foreign students can receive a scope of positive emotions by obtaining social network, engaging in new activities and events. At the same time, some foreign students may endure the student years abroad and “recall the loneliness and rejection of the foreign country” (Furnham, 2002: 1).

Alina and Diana both enrolled in the university; hence, they had an unequal point of departure to their student life, because Diana had already been living in Norway for one year. The start for Alina was unforeseen and sudden. She experienced melancholy and depression in the beginning. In her interview, she explained that she missed everything that she left behind in her home country. Fisher (1985) investigated the phenomenon of homesickness among foreign students. She reported that homesickness makes a significant influence on “academic performance for a student, at least for a short time”. Alina’s situation reflected Fishers findings. She could not concentrate on studying, she missed classes and was considering to go

back home every day. Alina explained that the circumstance that held her in Norway was her habit to complete things that she began; and trust in Divine Providence.

Alina: *“Everything is for a purpose. I believed that if I am here, God wanted it to be so.”*

Diana started her new life with a certain knowledge base; she learned the Norwegian language, and she already went through a process of adaptation. As such, she had so to say a “soft start” of her independent new life in Norway.

In order to become a student in the new country, the person must construct a new sense of belonging. To build the new sense of belonging also means that a person shall go through a process of acculturation and integration, and so his/her identity faces challenges. The old life with friends, work, and home is left behind. The new place may seem alien and a student faces a complex process when she/he should find the “own place” in the new society. First step to manage with psychological challenges is to create a social network with the peers (Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld 2005).

When Alina began to speak and understand the Norwegian language, the situation changed for her considerably. The feeling of being a complete stranger abandoned her. She found friends, she adjusted to the life in a small place and to the weather conditions and she began to feel happier. By that time, she had already made a decision to divorce her husband because she learned that he deceived her, and nothing hindered her from a clear new start in her life.

Adrian Furnham (2002) argues that social support and friendship networks “buffer” a student from the cultural shock and homesickness. The interview showed that Diana received support from her host family that contributed to her smooth transition of adaptation to the new environment. Alina’s situation changed when she began to speak the language of the host country and established a social network. At the same time, she devoted herself to a new love relation. This fact changed her view on her present life completely. She applied for a new study and decided to stay in Norway. The new love story was a testament for her belief in God’s providence.

Alina: *“God wanted me to come to Norway to meet Erik”.*

Emotional attachment and support from a new boyfriend gave Alina a sense of belonging and feeling of emotional stability.

Diana did not report about challenges in her student life. Quite the reverse, because of her language skills she found a job very easily and began to work. As so, she was busy most of the time.

Diana: *“There were moments when I felt lonely, but I was always occupied with something important. I was studying and working. I had a real life here”.*

Here I would to analyze the notion of “real life”. What actually does it mean for Diana? Diana as well as six other women dreamt to leave Ukraine. It was her desire. The desire is “voraciousness”, something that the person does not have; it is what she is longing for (Kristeva, 1987: 159). “It is in insecurity, the unsure imagination of the unknown, that the intensity of desire is born” (Kohn, 1998:72). When the desire is “operationalized” without restrictions, it loses its imaginary” and as so, it becomes a reality (Baudrillard, 1979:5). Diana experienced development in her identity, and she wanted to adapt as fully as possible to the characteristics she saw as “real” Norwegian. This young women learned the culture before she got married, and as so, she re-invented and adapted to the demands of Norwegian society. At the time when we conducted the interview, she identified more similarities between her and Norwegians, rather than differences. She lived a full life with no restrictions, and felt fully integrated and shared Norwegian norms and values. She fulfilled her desire and became part of the Norwegian reality.

5.4.3. To marry a Norwegian - a challenge or an opportunity?

I asked all my informants if it was a challenge or an opportunity to be married to a Norwegian man. As I have previously described, for most of internet wives it was a big challenge to start life in Norway with a Norwegian husband. Only Anjela and Natalia could establish good family relations with their spouses. Women reported that there were many obstacles from outside that influenced their relations with their husbands. The story of Alina and Diana differs. They did not “jump” into relations in order to leave their country. First, they went through a process of adaptation to the new culture and then, they started relations. Second, they did not meet their potential husbands on-line. They met them in traditional face-to-face way.

Alina met her future husband at a party where she went with her friend. After that evening, they began to date for the next three years before they decided to get married.

Alina: “...and then I met Erik...he charmed me. He has so many talents. We were laughing a lot, playing piano together, he was so romantic and they became good friends with my son. He was making good influence on him. So, by the end of the studying year I was deeply in love with him”.

Diana met her future husband at a Christmas party, in 2010. Two years later, they got married. Diana admitted that she did not consider marrying a man of different nationality. For her such choice seemed natural, because she lived a full life in Norway, she studied, worked, spoke Norwegian and it was her real life here.

Diana: “I think I wanted to marry a Norwegian because I am living here for a long time, I speak good Norwegian. I had experience in communication and relations with Norwegians. They are soft and gentle. I do not know. It was not a goal to marry Norwegian. I live in Norway, I am inside of the Norwegian environment, it happened naturally”.

It is important to mention that by the time when Diana had decided to get married, she already had a Norwegian residence, which was connected to her working visa. As so, marriage with a Norwegian did not make any advantage for her. Alina had the same situation. After the education, she had a full time job and working visa. These two women chose their future spouses only by personal attraction.

Both respondents admitted that that their marriage did not give them any advantages. Considering challenges, Alina and Diana had the same opinion as well. “*It depends on personality but not on nationality*”, they said.

I believe that their different life situation let them reason about family relations differently from the internet wives. At that time when they met their husbands, they already had an advantage in their situation. They felt as insiders to Norwegian culture, they were familiar with the norms of behavior here, and their identity went through a transition period. As so, they knew what their place in this society was. As Diana mentioned, she felt herself completely integrated. In addition, they were financially independent and had full time jobs according to their occupation. Diana worked in economy department in one of the companies in her region, and Alina worked as a teacher at a lower secondary school (ungdomsskule).

5.4.4. Cultural conflicts and their resolutions

Many couples experience conflicts in their relations. Diana and Alina pointed out that they had conflicts in the beginning of their relations many times.

Diana got married after she had been settled here for many years, she had Norwegian residence, full time job, went through the process of integration and acculturation. She was familiar with Norwegian norms and traditions. She did not enter the marriage with Ukrainian mentality and traditions and stated that the Norwegian culture became part of her, which in turn helped to resolve and avoid many possible conflicts. Nevertheless, like in any other family they had their disagreements.

Diana: *“After living for so many years here, local culture and style of life affected me. It became part of me. I am changed I am sure. I understand many things that might seem strange for newcomers...however, I can’t change completely and my husband never had experience with our culture, so sometimes I met misunderstandings”.*

Moreover, some values stay unchangeable for people despite living in a different culture. For example, she has a conservative attitude to the notion of family. She does not believe in divorce and think that people should struggle for their relations for children’s sake. She takes her inspiration looking at her parents who are more than thirty years together and believes that family should be like a castle, strong and unbreakable.

Alina told that she faced misunderstanding many times as well, and their disagreements were based on a cultural difference. She named such conflict issues as *friendship between genders, relations between relatives, attitude to children and hospitality*. In her opinion, the culture of behavior was so different, that it took a lot of time for her and her partner to find a solution regarding how to understand and treat each other with respect and to reach a peaceful resolution.

In Diana’s case, the conflicts occurred because of a clash of collectivistic and individualistic identities. In her opinion, the family is a one single unit and members of the family shall function as “one”. As an example, she told the story about an invitation to a party.

Diana: *“Once he wanted to go to a party without me because it was for friends only. There were men and women. I did not think it was appropriate to go alone when you are in relations. If I were him, I would rather go with me or would not go at all”.*

Diana said that they had many similar conflicts in the beginning. She concluded that such attitude was very unpleasant and she felt neglected and unimportant.

When the conflict situation is based on cultural differences, people can make wrong conclusions and misinterpret each other. Sara P.-Pope (2010:145) argues that the state of relationships can be evaluated by the level of conflict with the partner. In her opinion, conflicts are necessary for healthy and long-term relations. In her book, she refers to research on family couples, which indicated the presence of tension or absence of it. Families, that lived peacefully, divorced after three years, but couples that had temporary disagreements could save their relations. She suggested that an important issue in a conflict situation is to find the correct way to a peaceful resolution. Diana and Alina could find a way. They managed their feelings and confrontations by means of dialog. It helped them to find compromise and to understand their own feelings, as well as those of their partners.

Diana: *“First, I ask and listen for his opinion; I need reasonable explanation of his actions or point of view... we are having a dialog and we try to find compromise... negation was the only way of communication”.*

Alina: *“...We talk and explain our views and feelings...it is necessary if we want to have peace, love, and harmony in the family...Once Erik said, you have your own world and I have my own world, let us make OUR world... Every evening we are sitting and talking...about his and my expectations, choosing the best possible variant...It made us understand better each other and made us even closer to each other. We are good now. Relationships are a serious job”.*

Hence, she added, that in the beginning of their family life the manner of negotiation was a problem as well.

Alina: *“First years we had battles...we [Ukrainians] are emotional people, we show our emotions openly... We smile when we are happy and we shout when we are angry... Erik never raised his voice at me... He showed that we could solve conflicts being calm...and it worked out...”*

5.5. Influence of family life on self-realization

In this subchapter, I would like to express the opinion of all my informants on family issues and which role the family plays in their lives.

Family relations are a serious job indeed. Each couple has to find their own way to peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution and coping strategies. As my interviews with Ukrainian women showed, not all couples could succeed in creating a good family environment. Women who met their life partner on the internet described their life in Norway as a nightmare. Strong negative emotions and power imbalance in the family led them to disappointment in their spouses, the Norwegian system in general, depression, health problems, and feeling of helplessness and collapsed self-esteem. All of them came to Norway with certain hopes and beliefs for a better life. None of them had a plan as to how to build a “better life”, hence they were sure that a strong and happy marriage was the most important factor. Integration into the job market ranked the second place. I asked all informants what the self-realization and self-fulfillment means for them. All eight women gave the same answer:

“For a person self-realization means to be financially independent, to fulfill professional ambitions. As for a woman ...to build a strong family”.

Ergo, the self-realization for Ukrainian informants consists of two parts; first, self-realization as a woman, which means women’s happiness in the family; second, a self-realization as a person and that means achievements in a career. Moreover, these two parts are mutually dependent.

Among my informants, four women indicated that their marriage was unhappy and that is why they could not make any achievements in their careers. They felt depressed, demoralized, they could not find their place in the new society, they did not make plans for the future any more, and they had no more the capacity to struggle. Marina, Raisa, Lidia and Janna expressed that during their marriage they experienced humiliation, discrimination and violence from their husbands. It diminished their self-respect, self-esteem and gave them a feeling of helplessness. Helplessness is in itself a demotivating feeling. There are many theories and hypothesis regarding this feeling. Hiroto's experiment (1974)²⁶ on disruptive behavior in humans showed that if for a subject the situation seems uncontrollable, the subject

²⁶<http://jamiesmithportfolio.com/EDTE800/wp-content/PrimarySources/Seligman2.pdf>

cannot find a solution to the problem, or if a subject understands that there is a solution for the problem but she lacks the ability to solve it, it causes the feeling of helplessness. They concluded that helplessness arises if expectancy and outcome are incompatible. Life of Marina, Raisa, Lidia and Janna is a real reflection to this research. They contributed to the family comfort and happiness and as outcome; they expected appreciation and respect from their spouses. Instead, the outcome was disappointing; their husbands began to treat them as free working force. Their family life was uncontrollable, and decision-making power was uneven, women accepted that their men were leaders in the family and they were making all decisions alone. They explained it by financial dependence in early stages of their marriage and later they felt emotionally weak to fight with injustice and discrimination in the family. They lost control over events in their lives. They stated that they were not morally strong any more to confront their husbands, the attempt to build a dialog failed and they did not see a peaceful resolution of their conflicts. In such situation, helplessness was not only demotivating, but had a depressive effect as well.

Marina: *“You know if every day somebody tells you that you are a loser, in the end, you look to the mirror and you see a loser there. I changed a lot during marriage. I gained 15 kg. I stopped looking after myself; I felt that I did not deserve something good...he never gave me compliments. Once his sister told me that I have beautiful eyes, he looked at me and said-nothing special. I stopped dreaming about anything, I had no plans for future, and I thought my life would always go like that, and I was afraid of changes and had no energy even to think to change something. I lost the feeling of self-respect and self-esteem completely”.*

5.6. Summary of the chapter

Raisa, Lidia and Janna had the same reflections on the attitude of their husbands towards them and on the feeling of depression, which they received during their marriage. The depression was a consequence of constant feeling of helplessness.

Hence, these four respondents mentioned that the divorce could be a solution. Nevertheless, they did not want to consider it until the last moment of marriage. Marina divorced her husband after four years, and it was his initiative. Janna divorced after 5 years of marriage. The reason was her third visit to women’s shelter where she arrived battered by her husband and she had to live there for three months. Lidia got divorced after one year of their family life, and as she told, her husband threw her out together with their newborn baby boy. Only

Raisa is staying in marriage until now. She believes, that may *be one day something good will happen* to her; hence, she does not plan to divorce.

In my interviews, I asked women why they did not consider a divorce earlier as a solution to their difficult and dangerous situation at home. They gave emotionally mixed answers. Firstly, they mentioned that family was important and that they believed that their husbands would change their attitude. Secondly, they mentioned difficult financial situation and absence of a place to go. Thirdly, they wanted to avoid judgments by their parents and gossip inside the Russian-speaking community and friends in Ukraine.

Angela, Natalia, Alina and Diana said that they are satisfied with their marriage.

Angela found a way to escape conflicts by looking at the roots of problematic issues and looking for answers in academic literature. She is convinced that she found the best method to make a peaceful environment at home, and it gave her better understanding of people's motives and behaviors. Angela studies for the last seven years. She is unsatisfied with her professional achievements yet. In the future, she wants to have a full-time job and to become a professional, so her children and her husband could be proud of her. She hopes to submit her master thesis this year and to become a researcher in social sciences.

Angela: *“I would actually like to have a PhD in social research...I think I have good analytical skills...”*

Natalia explained that she is satisfied with her life because of stability, and she will never consider a divorce because of her child. In her interview, she did not define her marriage clearly. On the one hand, she called it stable, safe and good; she has a comfortable life in an expensive house. On the other hand, she called her husband boring, unsocial and annoying but calm, loyal, intellectual and well mannered. Natalia concluded that *he has attributes that are more positive and there is no reason for divorce*. Her life position is quite passive and she does not have a certain idea about her plans for future: *“I live today and usually do not make plans for the future”*. She just hopes to graduate and find a job, because she does not want to be financially dependent on her husband.

Alina and Diana are happy in their marriage and they have full time jobs. Only these two informants indicated that they achieved their personal self-realization. They believe that they

are successful women, who have both family and favorite jobs. They described their *marriage as romantic, happy, emotional and with problems like any other family.*

The life situation of Marina, Janna and Lidia changed spectacularly after they divorced their husbands. They stated that divorce gave them freedom. This freedom gave them opportunity to make own decisions, to set new goals and to move to self-realization. These women stated that during marriage their husbands were not interested in their intellectual and professional development. Marina, Janna and Lidia are sure now that their husbands did not need an equal partner in the family, but they needed free domestic workers who they could control. Such relations had a repressing effect on women's lives. These three informants pointed out that, they left marriage with cranked psychology and broken hopes.

The first year after the divorce, all three women experienced the feeling of disorientation and the feeling that they lost their home. They needed time for psychological rehabilitation; they needed time to believe in themselves again. Hence, the consequences of divorce had an impressively positive effect on their lives. The feeling of self-esteem came back to them. They believed in themselves again, and found inner power for active life position. Marina, Janna and Lidia continued to study. Marina completed the language course, driving course, and received a position of a trainee as engineer in one of the local companies. That was her dream when she was moving to Norway.

Marina: *“I moved out and immediately began to feel better...It was a relief...I began to feel stronger. After divorce I felt like I had been carrying, a heavy burden, and finally I dropped it off like a hot potato...I even did not want money or anything from him. I just wanted to be free...I have back my inspiration and motivation to be an engineer...I began to send CVs to engineering companies; I applied to university for Norwegian course again...I passed all exams. I have driving license as well. I began to believe in myself again. I lost weight. You know, when woman enjoys herself in the mirror, she thinks, you are beautiful, you are smart, you are nice, you deserve all the best in this life... I began to enjoy life and believe that I will work in a company...and I was accepted as a trainee. I am proud of myself now...I had time for rehabilitation in psychological sense; I was rethinking on many issues...Divorce was a positive thing. I found myself again”.*

Janna is working hard on her career development. She is continuously taking courses that are connected to her professional field, and is obtaining new qualifications. While she was

married, she had a half-time position as assistant in an elderly home. After the divorce, she accomplished the health course at “rehabilitation” and “health, environment and security” in the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees²⁷. Janna seems strongly motivated and ambitious about her career. Now, she is sure that nothing can hinder her from achieving a success.

Janna: “...Thanks to the divorce, I can decide for myself and set new goals for self-realization. The whole year before the divorce and one year after it, I had very strong depression. I had treatment... Before that [treatment], I felt myself like in a dead end. I was overloaded with offence, I still had some feelings for him, I felt underestimated, that he did not appreciate anything what I have done for him. Moreover, we always had conflicts about money. He made me sign a document according to which I lose my right for apartment if we get divorce. The apartment we bought together, I worked so much there. I painted walls, put tiles, inserted door handles, I did everything myself. He said that I must prove my love and sign that document. I did it. I did it because I loved him and did not think we would divorce. Two month later, he battered me, I came to crisis center and we started the divorce process. I cannot tell how bad I felt at that time. After treatment, I started a new life. I have no fears for my future now. I want to finish courses and get promotion at work. I want to become a successful woman, to have better salary, to buy my own apartment”.

Lidia moved from a small village to the city and enrolled at the university. In her interview, she explained that she always had an active life position and had professional ambitions. When she decided to move to Norway, she hoped that she would realize her professional dream to become a teacher. Now, after the divorce, she is concentrated on her study and after the graduation, she plans to move to Oslo. She believes that she will have more opportunities for her and her son there.

Lidia: “It became so much easier. First year I was crying of self-pity...I cried for unrealized hopes and ruined dreams... Now nothing hinders me. The biggest fear was to find a place in the kindergarten, and a place to live in the new city. Everything worked out well...To be a teacher is what I want to do in my life. I quit this job at home because with that salary I would not survive. Therefore, I had to find a better-paid job. Here teachers have decent salaries and it means that I can work for my pleasure. My ambitions did not allow me to stay in the village

²⁷Fagforbundet

and continue cleaning floors...I have an MA degree in Pedagogy. I think he [ex-husband] is annoyed that I want to get additional education and to grow professionally...He would not like me to develop professionally”.

Moreover, Janna and Marina started new relations. They believe that good relations give inspiration and increase motivation, and if a woman is happy at home, she can develop professionally. Lidia hopes to find the right man, who will give her emotional stability. She believes that new relations will be qualitatively different, because now she has cultural experience with Norway.

Lidia: *“After life in Norway new relations can be different. Relations are very important for a woman because only a man’s energy can give emotional stability. Just the woman should be wise and keep the fire of feelings. Now I am norwegianized. I am waiting for a proper man”.*

Thus, these interviews showed that there are two components of self-realization for the Ukrainian women: happy relations at home and achievements in career.

6. Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis was to investigate what the crucial factors are for self-realization for Ukrainian women in Norway.

In order to answer this question, I conducted interviews with eight women with Ukrainian backgrounds who got married to Norwegian men. I focused on such issues as acculturation and integration processes, how their identities were challenged, relations in the family and how these relations influenced women's self-esteem, and on coping strategies, which helped them to overcome the stress.

The main hypothesis was that the marriage of women who met their future husbands through the internet would experience different scenarios in relationships, compared to those who met them in person. Thus, in the beginning of this work, I assumed that there would be two main groups of informants: women who met their husbands personally and those who met them on-line. However, the analyses of interviews underlined that the place where and time when they met, played an important role too. Consequently, there emerged three groups: women who met their husbands on-line, women who met future husband personally in Ukraine and women who met future husband personally in Norway.

I have identified two crucial factors that seem important for self-realization for Ukrainian women.

The first circumstance is the geographical context. . Where and when they met with their husbands played a crucial role in their relations.

- 1) The research showed that women who had been settled in Norway for some period before they met their spouses, had less stress in the relations, could avoid many possible conflicts, which primarily were based on cultural differences. Their relations were happier, they had fewer contradictions at home and their husbands treated them with respect. These couples could develop peaceful resolution for their conflicts. In addition, these women achieved success in their careers.
- 2) One of the informants who met her husband personally in Ukraine has a stable relation today, but she does not feel satisfaction in her life. She characterized her life as stable but dull and boring. One case is not enough to draw any specific conclusions, but it is worth mentioning the difference, since this woman had some time and opportunity to "check out" what she could expect.

- 3) Women, who came from Ukraine as “mail brides”, did not fulfill their expectations. They moved to Norway without knowing much of their future husbands and the country, only having a stereotype in their heads that Norwegians are nice, polite and modern. They learnt the hard way that Norwegians can be different, and may be more authoritarian than Ukrainian men. The lack of knowledge turned out to be a disaster for them. Their husbands showed deviant behavior and oppressed their wives psychologically and physically.

The second circumstance for self-realization for all informants is the fulfillment of their gender role. The interviewees expressed the desire to have family; they wanted to satisfy their biological need of procreation and to fulfill their gender identity inherited in Ukraine. In other words, they wanted to be mothers, wives, to create an enjoyable environment at home, to take care of their husbands, feel love and respect between spouses. These factors worked as a driving force for women in their professional life. Women, who faced the cruel attitude of their spouses, stated that they developed depression, helplessness and a feeling of bitterness. Thus, they did not achieve self-fulfillment as women during their marriages and could not make any achievements in their careers until they got divorced. Mistreated women felt disempowered and demoralized. They were not capable to control their lives under the everyday psychological pressures, while women happy marriages saw wide horizons and they moved towards their goals and achieved professional success.

Another aim of this research was to investigate if the age difference of my informants made an influence on their way of thinking and self-defining. I wanted to understand if they have different views on family life because of their life experiences, and to see which group follows the progression of their integration and acculturation processes faster. The analyses of data, demonstrated that the younger generation adjusted themselves faster to the new social context. However, the crucial factor for faster integration was not the age but the specifics of their social environment and family live. Successful women did not meet destructive obstacles when they arrived in Norway. Their acculturation started relatively smoothly. Besides, the data of the research tells that the self-identification of women when they came to Norway reflected the Ukrainian cultural context, rather than the age difference. The women had the same life outlook and values and they had same reflections on determinant factors for self-realization irrespective to their age.

The next aim was to see if the cultural differences of regions in Norway (as the first place of informant’s arrival in Norway), influenced the life views of their husbands, and accordingly, the husband’s expectations from their wives and behavioral norms in family. In Norway, my

informants lived in four different regions. The analyses of interviews showed that the region of living made little difference. However, the data showed that among the five women who met their husbands in on-line matchmaking agencies, none of their husbands had high education. Four of the husbands showed aggressive attitude towards their wives. Education functions as an aggregate to provide the necessary knowledge, critical thinking and emotional development for an individual. Knowledge frames an individual's behavior and outlook. An educated person is more capable of expressing his thoughts and emotions in a peaceful way. Moreover, uneducated husbands are less likely to accept the Norwegian norms on gender equality. The explanation for such phenomenon may be attributed to their lack of high education.

In this thesis, I discussed the specific challenges that Ukrainian informants faced after they got married to Norwegians and how it affected their self-realization. Self-realization can have a broad meaning. During interviews, I encouraged my informants to define this notion according to their personal understanding of it.

The generally accepted interpretation of self-realization among scholars is the explanation proposed by Maslow. Self-realization or self-actualization as he named it is on the apex of the pyramid of the human needs, following after self-esteem, love and belonging, need for security and physiological levels at the bottom. In order to be able to reach the top level, all previous ones should be achieved. This seems to be correct for my interviewees.

In this work, I tried to demonstrate how Ukrainian women who lived with lack of security, financial problems and without being fulfilled emotionally tried to skip all levels of the pyramid and jump from the bottom to the top with no doubts and no fears, in a very natural way.

The fairy tale of Cinderella who waits for her charming prince is still the most popular story among the majority of women in Ukraine. Contemporary Ukrainian reality cannot satisfy their dreams. On the other hand, the Western World since the Soviet times and the "iron curtain" was perceived as a land of Eldorado. Many Ukrainian women left their country in search of "Eldorado", where they hoped to find not gold but their prince charming. One of those destinations has been Norway. Some came as workers, some as students, and many came here as wives. The dream for a beautiful life and a charming prince was a major motivation to seek husband abroad. The easiest way to achieve their dream was to utilize on-line matchmaking agencies.

Unfortunately, the reality differed from their expectations and women faced many unexpected obstacles on the way to their happiness. One of the major problems was a challenge in

communication with their husbands. The explanation for this is that Ukrainian women and Norwegian men are products of different societies. Ukrainian women inherited a collectivistic culture, where the individual exists as a member of some in-group. One of the core features of collectivistic cultures is that the individual may sacrifice her own needs and goals for the sake of the sake and stays with the in-group even if it makes highly costs. For my informants such group was their family. Prosperity of the family is the most important; woman finds her fulfillment and self-realization as mother and wife inside the family. On the contrary, in individualistic cultures the individual is concentrated on personal needs and personal prosperity. Norwegian husbands were representatives of such culture. The clash of two cultures inside one family provoked conflicts, misunderstandings, a feeling of bitterness and health problems for many Ukrainians who searched for better life.

The women's narratives showed that self-realization for the Ukrainian woman means both happy relations at home and achievements in the carrier. These are two components of their notion of self-realization.

Moreover, I would like to extend my findings with an additional observation. Women in stable relations, after some time, experienced the stagnation in their professional development. They do not set new goals, but are satisfied with their lives. Women who were not satisfied and split up, found inner resources, they do not find it sufficient to stop with the achieved results and their personal developments is continuously in progress. However, this observation needs deeper investigation and can be a subject for new research.

Another additional finding of this research is the gap between the Western feminist theory and Ukrainian reality. My analysis showed that Western feminist values and ideals are not compatible with the current mindset of Ukrainian women. Although they enjoy being financially independent, they comfortably accept the segregation of gender roles. Recent survey, which was conducted in Ukraine, showed that only nine percent of women share the feminists' values²⁸. The underlying struggle of western feminists is to nullify sexism, namely their fight is against the perception of the female as a sexual object. However, the Ukrainian women's self-image is a world apart. Actually, they cherish to be perceived and desired as the classical female in traditional society. They superimpose hyper-modern sexualized images of women on top of their acceptance of traditional gender roles. Barbie girl is one of the most popular ideals of beauty. The voluptuous female body is exploited in advertisements, billboards and media in order to promote sales of products, which have nothing to do with the

²⁸ <http://newseffector.com/news/78867-v-rossii-vsego-7-feministok-45-muzhchinam-takie-zhenschiny-otvratitelny.html>

female body, and this produces the dangerous stereotypes. Thus, Western feminist ideas and Ukrainian values do not overlap.

However, those women who do not agree with the roles, which are prescribed for them in Ukrainian society, are trying all possible ways to leave the country. Norway is always stereotyped as a rich country with equal gender roles, equal opportunities; and nice and kind men. All these work as a pull factor for Ukrainian women's migration.

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Appendix 1

| Name | Education from Ukraine | Norwegian husband has a university degree | How they met | Had been married in Ukraine | Children from relations in Ukraine | Got married in Norway | Children from marriage in Norway | Got divorce with Norwegian husband | New relations in Norway | Occupation |
|---------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Natalia | MA in Linguistic (English, German) | No | In-person, Ukraine | No | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | BA student, Substitute work as a secretary |
| Alina | MA in Mathematical Methods in Economy | Yes | In-person, Norway | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Graduated, full-time employment as a teacher |
| Lidia | MA in Pedagogy | No | Internet | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | University student |
| Marina | MA in Civil Engineering | No | Internet | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | engineer (trainee, full time) |
| Diana | Ma in Economy Science | Yes | In-person, Norway | No | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | full-time employment in economy department |
| Raisa | MA as Librarian, Archivist | No | In internet | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Substitute work as a cleaner |
| Janna | MA in Civil Engineering | No | In internet | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Work in elderly house, taking further education |
| Angela | MA in Pedagogy | No | In internet | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | MA student |

(Table 1)

Appendix 2

Here I would like to present my informants. I will describe how we met, my impressions about them, the place and the process of interviewing. All names were changed in order to protect my informants' confidentiality.

1. Natalia

We met with Natalia during one of the activities that one of my children participates. That day I saw her second time in my life and we had a chat on different. When our conversation came to the subject of lack of support from Norwegian husbands and the opportunities on the job market, I felt that we were talking about the subject, which interested me as a researcher. When she made a break in her monologue, and before she would tell me more, I honestly told her that the subject, which we came to, is the particular interest of my research paper. I asked if she would like to become an informant and to tell her story as part of my case study, explaining to her that I was a master student and at present working on my master thesis. Without hesitation, she agreed to become an informant for my master thesis.

Natalia proposed to meet in her house. Our conversation started with general subjects. She talked a lot about the house, showed the stunning view and made a small excursion inside their big house and proudly named the price of objects, appliances inserted in the kitchen furniture and bragged that their house costs over 10 000 000 NOK. Thus, we could start our interview only in two hours after my coming. Soon her husband came; she introduced us, and began to talk about the topic of my research in general. Her husband seemed to be very interested in the subject; he was asking me questions and reasoning about the cross-cultural marriages. In order to look at the other side of the medallion, I asked him if he would also like to give me an interview and he liked the idea to become a respondent for the research. Right after that Natalia asked if I would like to continue next time, we agreed to meet again in the city library. The day before we met second time, she sent me a text message, from which I understood that she was irritated about my proposition to her husband to become a respondent. She said that she is the host in her house and only she can decide if her husband can be involved in this or not. Next day we met in the city library. I did not feel comfortable after her message and decided to clear the situation, explaining that I did not insist, just proposed because he seemed to be so interested in the topic and was so enthusiastic. Nevertheless, I did not mean to make her feel unpleasant or unhappy. We agreed on that. This

time she was more concentrated on the subject and was giving more precise answers despite we were alone and there was nobody around us. The story that she had told me during our first meeting at kids' activities, differed from our interview in the library. It seemed like she was trying to filter the whole information she was giving to me. I asked her what changed and why the first time we met, she seemed to be very unhappy and now she characterized her situation as the perfect marriage. She answered that that time she was just upset with her husband. In spite of her filtering the information, she told me about some moments, which made me think that she is not completely honest with me. For example, just as a funny story she told me about the conversation with her 9 years old daughter. One day Natalia was unsatisfied with her child's behavior and she reacted on that. In response, the daughter told her that she has no right to teach her what to do, because she does not pay for anything, and it is the father who pays and buys food and clothes, so it is only the father who has right to make remarks and give orders. She told me this story as comic situation. Hence, the remarks of her daughter made me think, that probably the child witnessed the confrontation between parents, because in my opinion, the 9 years old girl would not make such direct connection between "who pays, that one orders".

Natalia is a 41 years old woman. She was born and lived in one of the biggest cities in Ukraine, which is a war conflict territory now (Novorossiia).²⁹ There she studied and received a master degree as interpreter in English and French. More than ten years she worked as a teacher of foreign languages. She lived with her parents in the big house, which her farther has built with his hands. She characterized her family as a middle class family, which never experienced poverty and they had stable financial situation. She told me that she was receiving money from her parents as an extra income and could afford fashion clothes, perfumes and other things which could make expression of been wealthy³⁰. Her parents had a big farm, and the products from the farm were the major income for them. Later she moved to the capital of Ukraine and began to work on the reception desk in one of the hotels. There she met her future husband. He was living as a guest in the hotel and he came with a group of Norwegians for business seminar. Natalia was single and wanted to have family. As she explained to me, she did not think to marry particular a Norwegian; she wanted to marry a foreigner. She began the relationships with him and saw it as opportunity for marriage and

²⁹The Federal State of Novorossiia is an unrecognized confederation of Donetsk People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine, which claims independence from Ukraine. Ukraine and no country have recognized their claim to independence.

³⁰Ukrainian people like to show the wealth. It is common to judge person by the way she/he is dressed.

leaving Ukraine. She was seeking economical and financial stability and wanted her child to be born in a country with economic stability. When they were dating, he impressed her with presents. First, he bought her washing machine. She was very impressed and told that all her girlfriends were coming to look at it³¹. Later he bought her golden watches. Friends were envied her and his generosity made her feel that she met a right man, who will be a good husband and will take care of her.

She had high expectations from life in Norway. She knew that Norway was a rich country. She thought that everything should be so easy and comfortable here.

Now they are married and have a daughter.

At present, she is working and preparing for the last exam in her Bachelor program.

In many aspects, she feels disappointed from life in Norway. She calls her marriage as good, she likes her house, she likes attitude of her husband to her but she thinks that he is a boring person and her life is boring. She does not want to change her life because of many reasons. First, she found economic stability, at the second, she does not have regular income and she is dependent on her husband, at the third, she is scared that if she decides to start new life, she might lose her child, in the fourth; she does not want to lose the comfort.

2. Alina

I met Alina in year 2008. We were both students in one of the universities colleges in Norway. We are best friends until now.

Alina always made impression on me as a very romantic person, little bit naïve and always very kind. There is always happy smile on her face, which sometimes she uses as a mask to cover her fears or uncertainty (my observation). She does not like to show her weaknesses to other people. She is very easygoing woman, who can make friendship in the queue line with a total stranger. She is open-minded on one hand, and on the other hand, traditional and conservative regarding family matters.

³¹ In 2005 not each family could afford automatic washing machine.

Alina is a 33 years old. She arrived to Norway with her 4 years old son in 2008. She came to visit her mother who is married to a Norwegian. Alina told that she did not have planned to move to Norway, especially to get married in Norway.

Alina is an urban woman. She has a MA in Mathematical methods in Economy and for three years, she worked as teacher of economy and profound mathematics at university in Ukraine. For the last year before she arrived to Norway, she lived alone with her son separately from husband.

According to Alina's words, she did not want to move from Ukraine, and her mother took the initiative. She decided to arrange new life for her daughter and to make her move here. She translated Alina's graduation documents and sent them to the university college. Then she invited her daughter to Norway for summer holidays. In one week, after they arrived she received the admission letter. Somehow, she convinced Alina to try the life in Norway for one year. Young woman agreed because she had difficult relations with her husband, had to raise son alone and emotionally it was hard for her. Later Alina learned that her mother wanted to arrange her marriage in Norway and making Alina a student was a first step in her plan. Nevertheless, Alina rejected the "rich" and "old" candidate and it spoiled relations with her mother.

Same year she got divorced with her husband and met her present husband. Before she met him, she was planning to go back home after finishing the Norwegian course, she did not like the small town and Norwegian lifestyle. She felt depressed and wanted to go back to her family, students and friends.

About her Norwegian husband, she was telling with romantic smile and warmth in her voice. She told that it was not love from the first site but he charmed her because he had many talents. They were laughing a lot, playing piano together, he was very romantic and they became good friends with Alina's son. After she met Erik (not real name), she decided to stay in Norway longer. She applied for one-year course to Trondheim University and was accepted as a student. Erik went with them and by that time, she was deeply in love with him. Alina believes that God brought her to Norway to meet Erik and she is sure that he was her man by destiny. She named several reasons why she married Eric after being living together for three years: He called her son "our son" and was making positive impact on the boy, they wanted to

have a daughter and she believes that child should be born in the in marriage; she wanted to settle down and to have stability.

Her marriage she described as “emotional, romantic and happy but with problems as any other family”. Her husband she described as “calm, patient, and stubborn, with principles, very kind and as child naïve”. They got married in 2012. They have daughter who is almost two years old and the son from Alina’s first marriage.

Now Alina is working as teacher of mathematics at secondary school, it was a full time job but now reduced to 75% because of the small child. Alina told that it was hard to find the job because in that area people have many negative preconceptions about foreigners. Nevertheless, she became the first foreign teacher in that area. Many times, she felt discrimination at work because of her nationality.

The interview with Alina took place in skype. She set the appointment to the late evening after her children went to sleep. She was in good mood, ready to answer to all questions, sometimes she was addressing my questions to her husband, translating them into Norwegian, but he was concentrated on some TV program and did not want to be involved into our conversation. Thus, he went to watch TV and she stayed in the computer room alone with me across the screen

3. Lidia

I met Lidia one year ago and we became friends through our children. She made an impression as very positive, always laughing and easygoing person. From the first time we met, she told me the story of her life and divorce in Norway.

Lidia is 35 years old. She is an urban woman. She has a master degree as a teacher of German and English. After graduation, she changed many jobs. The last job before she arrived here was a permanent job in one of the airline companies. A well-paid job let her be financially independent. In her home country, she lived together with her father.

She desperately wanted to have family but relations with men from Ukraine did not work out. That is why she became a client on the marriage market. Before she got married, she visited her future husband in his village. From her words, he lived in poverty and had many debts. She did not like the small village as well. There were only eight houses surrounded by the sea.

She explained that her optimism and desire to have the family was so strong that she hoped to find the job and to help her husband to pay his debts.

She got divorce with her husband after one year of their family life. There were many reasons for that. She told that despite all disappointments she tried to keep their union. The family issue was very important to Lidia.

Lidia is a fatalist. She believes that it was her destiny to meet her husband and to divorce him. The purpose of coming was to give birth to her son, whom she adores and loves infinitely.

This woman faced many difficulties in the new country. Her marriage she described as a challenge because she did not meet understanding and moral support from her husband. Just opposite, she met financial discrimination, injustice and humiliation. Her new relatives did not accept her. She compared her divorce to the nightmare. With poor Norwegian and no knowledge of Norwegian laws, she had to struggle with her husband who wanted to take the kid from her. These troubles did not break her down but made her stronger. She is very optimistic and making plans for the future.

Now she is a student at university. She plans to graduate and to move to the south of Norway. Lidia is setting as a goal professional development. She wants to become a teacher again because that is her specialization and this job brings her joy and satisfaction.

She still goes through the process of acculturation, yet, she thinks that it is difficult to adjust to Norwegian life style. As for a social person as she, it is hard to adjust to the style of communication here and expression of real feelings is problematic. Relations between relatives she described as strange. Hence, she is not comparing Ukrainian and Norwegian cultures, but learning to accept with respect Norwegian society with its rules.

The interview session with this woman went during two days. First day we met in the university, in the room where we were alone. At the second day she came to my house. Both times we were alone, nobody distracted us from our conversation, she agreed to use voice-reordering machine but asked to erase everything after I would transcribe our interview and translate it into English.

4. Marina

I know Marina for many years, we both lived in the same city in Ukraine and she was always making a double impression on me. In Ukraine, such women like Marina are called “a man in skirt”, or western equivalent is “iron lady”, yet she was very sensitive, romantic and always needs to be in relations. I knew that she is living in Norway now and we were in contact. Since she arrived here, I noticed a prominent change in her. She did not make an impression of a woman with strong personality anymore; she had very sad eyes, did not smile and could start crying all of a sudden and became impulsive. To become my respondent she agreed with no hesitations.

Marina is 55 years old. She arrived to Norway in 2008 and same year she got married to her Norwegian boyfriend who she met in one of the bridal sites. She has been married twice in her country and after the death of her second husband she dated Ukrainian men but each time was disappointed. She wanted to get married again and to have family and believed that foreigners should be more “gentle” and “nicer”. Marina explained that she cannot live alone and she always needs emotional fulfillment.

Marina is an urban woman. She has MA in civil engineering and she worked according to her occupation for the last 15 years before she arrived to Norway. In Ukraine, she lived in two rooms’ apartment with her son who was 24 years old by that moment.

According to Marina’s words, to be married to a foreigner and to move to Norway was a dramatic challenge for her. She met a lot of injustice and discrimination from her husband, as well as discrimination at work and in welfare organizations.

She got divorced with her Norwegian husband after four years of marriage. Her marriage she described as a nightmare and her ex-husband she described as psychopath.

In some month after divorce, Marina started new relations. Now they are engaged. Marina says that new relations are full of love, understanding and support, and new boyfriend made her believe in better life again. After she moved to her new boyfriend, she began to work as engineer on one company on the position of trainee. While she was married, she was working in the elderly house and did not hope for anything better.

It was late in the evening, when we met in Skype to discuss questions of my interview. She was at home with her new boyfriend. The interview took about 4 hours. He did not distract her. Marina said that his presence at home did not bother her, because he could not understand Russian. Nevertheless, she was in the separate room during all our interview session.

5. Diana

I knew Diana since we were six years old. We were classmates until we were 17 years old. After we finished school, we lost contact and never talked again until we saw each other on one of social networks. Then I learned that both of us are living in Norway now, and Diana was finishing her bachelor thesis that year. After that, we did not have contact for many years again. I called Diana when I began to collect data for my master research. I asked her if she would like to be my respondent and she agreed.

Diana is 34 years old woman. She arrived to Norway as au pair in 2004, right after she graduated from university and obtained a master degree in Economy sciences. She left Ukraine because of economic reasons. She was choosing the host family among several European and Scandinavian countries. She stopped her choice on Norway because she felt that the host family seemed nice and pleasant. For one year, she worked in that family and established good relations with them. During that year, she learned Norwegian language and passed the Bergen test with high score. Same time she applied to one of the universities in Norway and received a place on a bachelor program in Economy and administration. When she was on second year of her BA program, she began to work in one of the local companies in economy department for few hours a week, than her working hours increased to 50 % and after graduation, she got full time job there. Now she is working at the same company on administrative position.

With her husband, she met on the Christmas party at 2010. He is working for the same company. They got married two years later and now they are raising a son who is 3 years old.

Diana explained that she got married to a Norwegian because she was living here for a long time, she speaks good Norwegian and because she is inside the Norwegian environment, it happened naturally.

Her husband she characterized as soft, polite, romantic, loyal and reliable. Their marriage she described as stable and happy. In their family, they are using two languages: Russian and Norwegian.

She was at home at the day when we arranged the interview because she was sick. She told me that she was at home alone and that fact, I believe, let us to talk in more relaxed manner, because nothing was distracting her. The interview was on the phone. That is why I could not follow her face expression but could here only the voice intonation. During the whole interview, I did not hear any tension or unease in her voice. I felt that she talked openly and provided honest information.

6. Raisa

I met Raisa in 2007. We studied at the same course of Norwegian language and culture for foreigners. For her it was an obligatory program, which all immigrants should participate.

That time we lived in neighbor towns and sometimes when her husband had business trips I was visiting her. She was making an impression of a person who enjoyed life, was very social and optimistic. She was always showing hospitality. That time she was telling that she loved to have guests but her husband prohibited to invite anybody. That is why she was inviting guests when he was not in the town. During our studying, we became friends and she shared her life story with me. Her optimism was incredible. In spite all difficulties she believed in the best and had long-term plans for her life in Norway. After I finished the course I moved to another place, and we did not see each other again, with time we stopped talking on the phone as well and I did not know anything about her. When I was collecting my informants, I remembered about Raisa and took contact with her. As always, she was very friendly and agreed to become my informant. During the interview session, I noticed a drastic change in her attitude to life. She sounded like a person who is tired of life and does not see any perspectives. She disappointed in her marriage and said that the only reason why she does not get divorce is that she will not survive on her salary if she will live alone. She feels loneliness, depression, does not have hopes and plans for future.

Raisa is 53 years old woman. She is an urban woman, she was born in one of the biggest cities of Ukraine and lived their till she got married to a Norwegian man. Raisa lived together with

her son in a tiny apartment. In Ukraine, she got education as librarian and archivist and worked according to her specialization for the last twenty years before she arrived here.

She met her husband on one of the match making sites in 2005, same year they got married and since then she is living in one of the small towns of Norway. This was her first marriage in her life. In Ukraine, she had short term relations and she has an eleven years old son from her ex-partner in Ukraine. The son arrived to Norway with her.

She characterized her life in Ukraine as full of loneliness and desperation because she had a low paid job, though it was a stable job, she did not have a life partner and she was drowning in daily routines. Her son has a diagnosis as ADHD (attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder), so all her life was concentrated on work and her son. She dreamt about a husband, who would provide her emotional and sexual stability and who could share her daily routines and provide financial support. The only opportunity to find such person she saw in the internet match making agencies. Hence, she told that she had many friends, and they were visiting each other every weekend. Raisa explained that despite the difficult life situation, she is a very social person and her friends gave her a feeling of happiness and a feeling of emotional support.

Next year after she moved to Norway started to work in a cleaning service. She is doing the same job until now.

It was a six hours telephone interview, which we had during two days. Unfortunately, I could not follow her body language and face expressions. Nevertheless, I could hear her sad voice when she began to tell about her marriage. Both times we talked at the day time, she took days off from her work and according to her words both times she was at home alone. She told me the whole story of her marriage; she said it was important for her to let people know how Norwegian husbands can be unfair to their foreign wives.

7. Janna

Janna became my respondent because of “snow-ball effect”. She is a friend of Marina and she agreed to become a respondent for this research because Marina asked her to participate.

Janna is a 51-year-old woman. She arrived to Norway in 2007 and same year she got married. In Ukraine, she lived together with her 25-year-old son in two rooms’ apartment. She received

MA in civil engineering but because of collapse of Soviet Union and unstable economic situation, she did not work for too long according to her specialization. She changed different professions during her life in the home country, she was working in restaurants, food store, ran her own clothes store.

She met her Norwegian husband on match making site. She decided to use internet agency because she felt lonely and disappointed in local men. According to her words, she did not plan to get marry at all. She explained that during her life she has been married once and got divorce in one year. After that, she never wanted to get married again. After the divorce, she was in relations but it did not last long. In 2005, she met Thomas (made up name) on the bridal site and they became friends. During that time, she planned to receive Greece passport and was going through procedures in order to obtain Greece citizenship. Janna told that she was not sure if she wanted to leave Ukraine but she wanted to travel, to discover new places and new life, and she wanted give freedom to her son and opportunity to live independently. That is why she applied for Greeks passport. In 2006, they decided to meet and go for vacation together. When Thomas came to visit her, they fall in love each other. Thomas invited her to visit Norway but she was rejected in visa. By that time, Janna understood that she wants to be with that man and they got married. In 2012, they got divorced. She described her marriage as it had three phases. The first was phase of love, then a cold war and the third phase was emotional emptiness with deep depression. Her ex-husband she characterized as emotionally unstable person, who wanted to have total control over her life. During their marriage, she became a frequent guest in the shelter for women, last year of their life she was under the treatment of psychologist, suffered from migraine and panic attacks. Their marriage finished after her husband abused and battered her; and for the last time she ended up in the shelter.

It was a Skype in-depth interview, which took about five hours. We divided interview on two sessions at the same day. During the first session I felt that Janna was more engaged in the interview, it was more like monologue where she was uncovering all her feelings, conflicts and she did not hide even the details of her sexual life. During the second session, which was after 8 o'clock in the evening, she was more passive, with less enthusiasm and I led the conversation with relevant questions. Thus, I was not always getting direct answers to the questions below because the first part of conversation was so to say in the flow mood. It helped me to look into Janna's perspective of her life situation. Hence, during the analyses I

sorted the information according to the questions in the most relevant way. While we were talking, she was at the apartment that she rents, which looked small but cozy and tidy. During the interview, she was with her female friend, which came to visit her from another city for the weekend. She said that she had no secrets from her, because the friend was the witness of her relations with her husband every day. That time when she was married they were living in the same city and were studying together, after they began to work in different places and could not see each other every day, they were chatting on the phone, complaining about their husbands to each other and discussing family problems. Thus, the friend was so to say involved in her family relations, and new everything. Nevertheless, during the interview, her friend was not in the kitchen, where Janna was while our conversation.

8. Angela

I know Angela for many years; we met in year 2007 in one of the small Norwegian towns where we took the course of Norwegian language and civilization for foreign students. Angela was one of the best students, she showed herself as goal oriented, concentrated on details and very stubborn. This course occupied all her thoughts; the Norwegian grammar was the only field of her interest and topic for a discussion. Later she explained that she has been living in Norway for the couple of years by that and faced a discriminative attitude from Norwegians toward her. Even when she entered the course, the professor who was in the admission committee encouraged her to withdraw her documents, and stay at home with the child and find some simple work. Such attitude activated her motivation to study and to prove that a foreigner does not mean to be a worse quality person. Discrimination encouraged her to learn language and receive additional master in Norway.

Angela is a 39 years old. She is an urban woman, from one of the biggest cities of Ukraine. She has MA in Pedagogy from Ukraine. At her home country, she worked as a teacher for six years and later she changed her working place because of the low salary and began to work in shopping mall as a manager on sales.

She arrived to Norway in 2005. Here she finished the course in Norwegian language and enrolled as a MA student in social sciences. She got different working experiences on low paid jobs after she came to Norway. Now she does not work and is concentrated on writing of her master thesis.

I shall admit, that interview with Angela differed from all previous interviews. In case with her, she made me analyze and think on my questions and often I felt that I was interviewee myself. During the years that we did not talk, I forgot that she was a person who goes deep into details. To almost all questions, she was responding with question “what do you mean by that?” For example, she could not just answer to the question “what is the attitude of your husband to your education”. She needed details: “Do you mean my desire to study, or the chosen area of study, or that I study so long? What do you mean by that?” When I asked her about cultural conflicts, she asked me what I meant by cultural conflicts, what I meant by conflicts: physical or just arguments, and what I meant by culture: traditions or mentality. Thus, she had questions to nearly all my questions. After my explanations, she was giving the answer to the questions.

During our conversation, she mentioned many times that her case is untypical. In some way that was true. She started dating her future husband in internet. Hence, she did not meet him on the matchmaking site. She had an online profile and wanted to marry a foreigner. Her case was unusual because her mother made match making. Her mother heard about a Norwegian man who wants to get married to Ukrainian girl on the way to bus stop from a woman with who she started chatting on her way. The daughter of the woman was married to Norwegian as well and they had a friend who wanted to have Ukrainian wife. Women exchanged phone numbers. In a few days, the woman from bus stop called and gave the email of Norwegian groom. Angela decided to try the chance and sent email to the man who she had never seen in her life. Thus, they began to chat and learn about each other. Later he came to visit her and they decided to get married. Now they are married for ten years and having three daughters. Angela admitted that she is happy in her marriage because she has analytical mind and she is capable to stay away from conflicts. Her marriage she characterized as stable and her husband as honest and loyal.

It was a four hours Skype interview. During the interview session, she was at home alone, her husband was at work and her kids were already sleeping. Thus, we could speak freely and no one disturbed us.

