

**Constructing motherhood:
Russian women bringing up children in Bergen, Norway**

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to explore how Russian women have constructed motherhood within the Norwegian context. The empirical material came from qualitative, loosely structured interviews with nine middle-class, educated, Russian immigrant women in Bergen, Norway.

In this study motherhood was understood as both constructed and contextual, and as part of a broader conceptual framework made up of the following: Baumrind's typology of parenting styles; a culture, gender and social class perspective on parenthood; and the interrelation between acculturation and cultural identity in the context of immigrant parenting. Motherhood was also seen as a changing and changeable practice, both within a particular socio-cultural setting and in the context of the lives of these mothers, allowing for the possibility to explore the influence of transnational ties and historical change on the construction of cultural identity and immigrant motherhood.

The interplay between structure and agency was explored in relation to the way in which study participants had adapted to, and reconciled, what they recognised as the possibilities and limitations of childrearing in Norwegian society. Regarding the position of informants as Russian immigrant mothers, examples were given that show the capacity of the research participants to navigate within the Norwegian social and cultural setting, and their recognition of the advantages and disadvantages of motherhood in this context. The agentic capacity of these women has been brought to the fore as an overarching theme across the three main aspects of this research: motherhood in the Norwegian context, gendered parenthood, and cultural identity and culture transmission.

This study has explored the way in which the research participants conceived of their mothering role in relation to their knowledge of gender relations and cultural conceptions of motherhood in their host country, Norway, and their native country, Russia. The most significant findings that came across through the interview process was that these mothers were as much concerned with discussing and defining what 'Russianness' meant in their own lives and the lives of their children, as with highlighting the influence of Norwegian cultural values on their mothering practice. This impacted on both their discussion of gendered parenting roles and the transmission of Russian culture to their children. Part of their agentic capacity was manifested in the way in which they each chose to position themselves differently and selectively in relation to Norwegian and Russian cultural practices and to specific aspects of

motherhood. Each mother was going through her own individual process of acculturation which involved exercising agency as part of the construction of immigrant motherhood. This study is adding to previous research by giving weight to intragroup differences and presenting individual research participants in both an in-depth and holistic way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Motherhood in the context of immigration can be understood as raising children in a situation where social constructions of motherhood and culturally appropriate mothering practices are not necessarily in line with migrants' existing ideas and ideals. The interaction of immigrant mothers with the social and cultural setting of the host country brings to the fore issues of sameness and difference, personal and cultural identity, and social status. In this sense, the situation of Russian mothers in Norway involves the meeting of two specific socio-cultural frames of reference in the context of childrearing, and the potential for adaptation and change in the way in which motherhood is conceived and practiced. The specificity of this particular cultural interaction highlights issues of gendered parenthood and cultural identity, and offers new perspectives on both.

Russian women living in Norway have hitherto been researched in relation to their transnational marriages to Norwegian men¹ and their somewhat negative portrayal in the Norwegian media.² As part of the immigrant population in Norway, Russian women have been included under the labels of 'immigrant women' or 'immigrant mothers', both of which are charged with meaning and create the illusion of a homogeneous group. It has been argued that the word 'innvandrere' ('immigrants') is a powerful rhetorical concept and a stigmatizing way of 'othering' people of non-western descent.³ The debate around immigrant women in Norway, who are frequently portrayed as being 'down-trodden' and victimized, often places them in contrast to 'Norwegian women', who experience more gender equality. Arguably, the stereotypical picture of the 'immigrant woman' as passive and excluded does not allow for the resourcefulness shown by these women in their everyday lives.⁴ In much research conducted on cultural diversity in the Nordic countries, focus has been given to the challenges that immigration poses to the welfare state and the complex and difficult situation for migrant women. Over the past decade, however, more and more studies have looked at immigrant women with different cultural backgrounds, rather than simply treating them as a homogeneous group. I would argue that further research is called for, to provide a more differentiated picture of the lives of immigrant women in Norway within different ethnic groups and my project will

¹ See Lotherington, A. T. and Fjørtoft, K., 'Russiske innvandringskvinner i ekteskapets lenker', *NIKK magasin* 1, 2006, p. 30-31, and Lotherington, A. T., 'Over grensen. Konstruksjoner av likestilling og norskhet i russiske-norske familier', *Tidsskrift for Kjønnforskning*, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 6-19, amongst others.

² Leontieva, A. N. and Sarsenov, K., 'Russiske kvinner i skandinaviske medier', *Kvinne Forskning. Øst-Vest relasjoner: Europeisk integrasjon i et kjønnsperspektiv*, Vol. 2, 2003, p. 17-30

³ Gullestad, M., *Det norske sett med nye øyne: kritisk analyse av norsk innvandringsdebatt*, Oslo: Universitetsforl., 2002, p.89

⁴ Seeberg, M. L. and Hassan, S. C., 'Tett på innvandrerkvinner', *Tett på*, Oslo: Røde Kors, No. 1, 2013, p. 5

add to this research by studying a small and defined group of immigrant women, focusing on their agentic capacity.

Russian women living in Norway are a group associated with somewhat negative connotations, much of which is bolstered by the national media in Norway,⁵ and research on this group of women has mainly focused on their relationships with Norwegian men. The lives of Russian mothers have not been subject to in-depth research, either in relation to Russian women living in Norway or in the research field of immigrant mothers in Norway. The research picture of Russian immigrant women in this respect is incomplete. In my project I aim to give a more nuanced picture of Russian immigrant women than the one available in Norwegian media discourse and research literature, and to shed light on the mothering practice of Russian women in Bergen, Norway.

My choice to focus on Russian mothers as opposed to another ethnic minority group in Norway was based partly on my past education in Russian studies and my own personal interest in Russian society and culture. Having lived for a year in Russia I have had some first-hand experience of life and gender relations in contemporary Russian society which inspired an interest in this topic. The specific situation and experiences of Russian women in Bergen is also of interest in that previous studies exploring the status and lives of Russian women have largely been set in towns in Northern Norway where people with Russian background make up the largest percentage of immigrants due to the popularity of migration over the border between Russia and Norway.⁶ Brought to the fore in this research is the rich history of geo-political antagonism between “East” and “West” as also reflected in the discourse on Russian women in the Norwegian media. So, in my project, choosing a field-work location that is home to people from a multitude of different cultural backgrounds may allow for other dynamics and subtleties of cultural comparison to come to the fore. Further, choosing to focus specifically on mothers with a Russian background assumes, but only as a starting point, that there is a degree of common social and cultural understanding within this group.

The main objective of this project is to explore how Russian women *construct* motherhood in the Norwegian context. As part of this objective, I will look at the agentic capacity of these women to negotiate their place as mothers and how the social structures within

⁵ Flemmen, A. B., 'Russiske kvinner i nordnorske aviser – minoritets- og majoritetskonstruksjoner', *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2007, pp. 37-54

⁶ Lotherington, A.T. and Fjørtoft, K., 'Capabilities and participation: Russian women immigrants in North Norway', in Hvinden, B. and Johansson, H. (ed.) *Citizenship in Nordic welfare states: dynamics of choice, duties and participation in a changing Europe*, Routledge: London, 2007, pp. 112-124

which they are acting have the potential to support, limit and shape their mothering ideals and practices.

This overall aim will be achieved by exploring three more specific research questions:

- What are the ideas and ideals of motherhood held by these Russian women seen in relation to the practice of bringing up children in Norwegian society?
- How is gendered parenthood and the division of work/child-care/housework between husband and wife practiced and portrayed by my study participants?
- How do these women conceive of the mother-child relationship and what role does Russian language and cultural identity play in this relationship?

The structure of this thesis will be based largely, but not exclusively, on these three questions to guide my chapters of empirical analysis. After providing information about motherhood in the Norwegian and Soviet/Russian context, I will discuss the conceptual framework of the study followed by a review of academic literature connected to this area of research. I will then give an overview of the methodology and methods used as part of both my fieldwork and data analysis. My three empirical chapters will follow, where I will explore my research data, namely from gender and culture perspectives, also giving weight to the middle-class status of my informants and the particular social and cultural context in which they are practicing motherhood. To conclude, my thesis I will discuss my findings in light of the overarching theme of my research, namely the construction of motherhood of Russian immigrant women in the Norwegian context, giving focus to the agentic role of these women.

I am aware that the term ‘construction’ could potentially be misunderstood, by being seen to denote a completed process and to suggest the existence of a pre-discursive subject, as argued by Jeremiah.⁷ However, I am using the term ‘construct’ to specifically denote an experiential process of enacting and adjusting cultural ideas and ideals. This is linked to my focus on agency in motherhood, which will be discussed as part of my conceptual framework.

⁷ Jeremiah, E., ‘Motherhood to Mothering and Beyond: Maternity in Recent Feminist Thought’, *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, Vol. 8, No. 1/2, pp. 21-33

Chapter 2: Contextual motherhood

The Norwegian Context

All of the informants in this study had become mothers for the first time in Norway, apart from one mother who migrated with a four year old child, and all have mostly brought up their children in the Bergen area. Thus in order to put their experiences into context it is important to discuss motherhood and gender relations in the Norwegian social and cultural setting.

According to Syltevik and Wærness, the dominant family ideal in public discourse in Norway has changed from a single-breadwinner model to a dual-breadwinner model where both men and women are now expected to share the responsibility of working to provide for the family and caring for the children.⁸ Over the course of a generation ideals of gender roles have changed from “the good housewife” and “the good provider” to the ideal of “the equal parents”. There is also an ideal of the independent individual who earns his/her own wage and it is no longer seen as acceptable for a woman to be financially dependent on a man.⁹

Gender equality is an ideology that is strongly promoted in the Norwegian context. The implementation of gender equal policies and the prevalence of such focus in government discourse has arguably made gender equality a national narrative and part of a national ideology of gender relations. Norway is also recognised for its strong welfare state that gives support to both working and stay-at-home mothers and is considered a particularly good place to be a mother, being ranked first in the Save the Children’s ‘State of the World’s Mothers 2015’ report based on five indicators: maternal health, children’s well-being, educational status, economic status and political status.¹⁰

What has been called the ‘politicisation of parenthood’ has been pioneered by Scandinavian countries and is closely linked to gender equality as an important part of the welfare state model.¹¹ National policies that aim for equality of opportunity in combining parenthood and employment include a right to paid parental leave (49 weeks on full pay or 59 weeks on 80% pay), the right to stay home when one’s child is unwell, and subsidized childcare services.¹² Brandth and Kvande have looked at certain aspects of family policy in relation to

⁸ Syltevik, L. J. and Wærness, K., ‘Det rasler i lenker – forsørgernormer i endring?’, in (ed.) Ellingsæter A. L. and Leira, A., *Velferdsstaten og familien: utfordringer og dilemmaer*, Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2004, p. 100

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102

¹⁰ ‘The Urban Disadvantage: State of the World’s mothers 2015’, Save the Children, 2015

¹¹ Ellingsæter, A. L. and Leira, A., ‘Introduction: Politicising Parenthood in Scandinavia’ in Ellingsæter, A. L. and Leira, A. (eds.), *Politicising parenthood in Scandinavia: Gender relations in welfare states*, Bristol: Polity Press, 2006, p. 2

¹² Bø, I., ‘Equal gender opportunity: Couples in the gap between principles and practice’, *Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2008, p. 439

its effect on gender relations in Norwegian society and have found that the father's quota (currently 10 weeks) of parental leave, which is gendered, has had a positive effect on the participation of fathers in child care and has encouraged more gender equality in society.¹³ However, the cash-for-care scheme (home care allowance), which is gender-neutral in that either parent is permitted to stay at home with the children, is perceived and practiced as gendered and has done little to encourage more fathers to take part in child care.¹⁴ Ellingsæter has thus talked of the 'hybrid family policy model' in Norway, where families with more gender equal as well as more traditional arrangements are supported by the state.¹⁵ This can be seen as a certain ambiguousness in Norwegian family policy and ideology.

The complex relationship between policy intent and policy outcome has thus been widely discussed in relation to the Norwegian context and it has been pointed out that there is a gap between the ideal parental roles presented in public discourse and the reality of everyday practice.¹⁶ Amongst parents with a youngest child of 0-2 or 3-6 years old in 2001, a quite significant 74.9% or 84.9% of mothers and 93.9% or 94.1% of fathers were participating in the labour market.¹⁷ However, there is a tendency for men to be the main providers and for women with children to work more part-time, with variation in the division of providing and caring that takes place within families.¹⁸ Recent decades have seen an increase in the amount of time that fathers are spending with their children and it has been argued that this care-giving has been incorporated into their construction of masculinity and the fathering role.¹⁹ Whilst traditionally gender differences in parenting roles have been heightened in families with infants, in 2010 fathers with young children worked less and used significantly more time on child-care and housework than fathers in 2000.²⁰ However, there is still marked gender differences in that mothers still carry the main responsibility for children and the household irrespective of their work situation and still use more time on housework than fathers.²¹ Also, whilst the caring carried out by fathers is focused on spending time with and doing activities

¹³ Brandth, B. and Kvande, E., 'Gendered or Gender-Neutral Care Politics for Fathers?' in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 624, 2009, pp. 177

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186

¹⁵ Ellingsæter, A. L., 'The complexity of family policy reform. The case of Norway', *European Societies*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2003

¹⁶ Bø, I., *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Kitterød, R. H. and Kjeldstad, R., 'Foreldres arbeidstid 1991-2001 belyst ved SSBs arbeidskraftundersøkelser, tidsbruksundersøkelser og levekårsundersøkelser', *Statistisk Sentralbyrå*, No. 6, 2004, p. 19

¹⁸ Syltevik, L. J. and Wærness, K., *op. cit.*, p. 104

¹⁹ Brandth, B. and Kvande, E., 'Masculinity and Child Care: The Reconstruction of Fathering', *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1998, pp. 293-313

²⁰ Kitterød, R. H. and Rønson, M., 'Jobb og hjem i barnefasen. Nå jobber også far mindre når barna er små', *Søkelys på Arbeidslivet*, Vol. 31, No. 1-2, 2014, p. 34

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36

with their children,²² mothers often take on more practical responsibility for children, such as having an overview of needs and tasks.²³

Ellingsæter has argued against the labels of ‘working mothers’ and ‘stay-at-home mothers’ in the Norwegian context as the reality is that there is much diversity in patterns of employment and women are rather making choices as to ‘different strategies for combining work and children.’²⁴ According to Stefansen and Farstad these care strategies are influenced by class, with core elements of the policy measures available to Norwegian parents being understood and combined in different ways.²⁵ The influence of educational level on mothering preferences and practices amongst women in Norway has also been researched, with well-educated mothers having spent consistently more time on active childcare over the past decades than less-educated mothers.²⁶ These mothers also tend to be more enthusiastic towards gender equality ideology and policy and have a stronger negotiating power with regards to the division of household tasks.²⁷

However, in general, childcare is split between both the family and the state, with the extent to which caring duties of parents are taken over by the state, primarily to facilitate the employment of women, being referred to as ‘defamilization’.²⁸ The number of children attending kindergarten is very high, with 90% of 1-5 year olds being enrolled in childcare services in 2012.²⁹ The kindergarten is now an important social institution in Norway, being part of what is considered a normal childhood and parenthood; an undisputed good for children aged 3 years and over (and to a large extent seen as positive for the development of 1-2 year olds).³⁰ Norwegian kindergartens are based on a social pedagogical tradition common to the Nordic countries, which is typified by a holistic approach to child development and learning.³¹ Kindergartens have always been based on a combination of care, play and learning but in recent

²² Brandth, B. and Kvande, E., op. cit.

²³ Bø, I., op. cit., p. 440

²⁴ Ellingsæter, A. L., op. cit., p. 434

²⁵ Stefansen, K. and Farstad, G. R., ‘Classed parental practices in a modern welfare state: Caring for the under threes in Norway’, *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2010

²⁶ Kitterød, R. H., ‘Mothers’ Housework and Childcare: Growing Similarities or Stable Inequalities?’, *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 45, 2002, p. 127-149

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Leira, A., ‘Parenthood change and policy reform in Scandinavia, 1970s-2000s’, in Ellingsæter, A. L. and Leira, A. (eds.), *Politicising parenthood in Scandinavia: Gender relations in welfare states*, Bristol: Polity Press, 2006

²⁹ Ellingsæter, A. L., ‘Towards universal quality early childhood education and care: The Norwegian Model’, in Gamaro, L. and Waldfogel, J. (eds.) *An equal start? Providing quality early education and care for disadvantaged children*, Bristol: Policy Press, 2014, pp. 53-76

³⁰ Ibid., p. 70-71

³¹ Ibid., p. 55

years the emphasis on play-time and the development of social competence has weakened somewhat, with learning and cognitive development being gradually more accentuated.³²

Approaches to parenting in the Norwegian context have been discussed by Hennem in research that has explored the cultural codes of love and authority in parent-child relationships.³³ She argues that the dominant cultural discourses of what it means to be 'loving parents' are: the wanted child, the good childhood and the youth-as-product. These create the picture of a child that has special importance and a special relationship with its parents, with rights as both a child and an individual and deserving of a happy childhood with 'kos'³⁴ and play; namely a childhood without great difficulties. For both parents it is intimacy that is the context for both the understanding and communication of parent-child relations, providing a framework in which love as the dominant cultural code is expressed and into which the exercising of authority must fit.³⁵ Hennem also points to the fact that immigrant parenting may not fit into this cultural understanding of the intimate relationship between parents and their children and this could potentially lead to difficulty in the construction of parenthood for certain immigrant groups in the Norwegian context.³⁶

Stefansen and Aarseth have drawn a link between a distinct type of parent-child intimacy, which they have called 'enriching intimacy', and its role in the transmission of cultural capital in middle-class Norwegian families.³⁷ This form of emotional intimacy is based on the mutual sharing of enriching activities, with recognition of the child as equal and with focus on the child's own initiative and self-directedness. They have referred to Marianne Gullestad's analysis of the cultural shift from 'external to internal discipline through expressivity' in childrearing and - instead of teaching children to behave according to a set standard - providing resources in order for children to manage and develop themselves within certain limits.³⁸

In this research project the Norwegian context is understood as the institutional framework that facilitates motherhood, as well as dominant ideals of gender equality and what it is to be a 'good mother'. Gendered aspects of parenting roles are also included in relation to normative ideas of parenting roles and the division of paid work, child-care and housework.

³² Ibid., p. 71

³³ Hennem, N., 'Å formidle seg selv som kjærlig mor og far i en norsk kontekst', *Fokus*, Vol. 32, No.3, 2004

³⁴ 'kos' in Norwegian can refer to a warmth and closeness with others as well as experiencing enjoyment.

³⁵ Hennem, op. cit., p. 155

³⁶ Ibid., p. 156

³⁷ Stefansen, K. and Aarseth, H., 'Enriching intimacy: the role of the emotional in the 'resourcing' of middle-class children', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2011, pp. 389-405

³⁸ Gullestad, M., 1996 in Stefansen, K. and Aarseth, H., op. cit., p. 394

Motherhood in the Soviet and Contemporary Russian context

Since the mothers in this study have migrated during adulthood and have thus been socialized in another country, it can be assumed that their experiences in Norway have to a certain extent been understood in relation to the social and cultural framework of understanding that they take with them from their country of origin. The Norwegian context will be interpreted through the backgrounds of these women, as well as ongoing contact with their homeland, thus it is important to be aware of the ideas and ideals of motherhood both in the Soviet Union and in contemporary Russia.

The welfare state in the Soviet Union was a comprehensive institutional system based upon universalist principles similar to the social democratic model described by Esping-Andersen.³⁹ In the Soviet state gender was a key organising principle and the role of women was defined as ‘worker-mothers’ with a duty to work and produce the next generation of Soviet citizens.⁴⁰ Motherhood, as opposed to parenthood, was politicised and championed as the highest form of service to the state, with mothers being depicted as heroines deserving of reward.⁴¹ This depicted motherhood as a relationship between mother, child and the state, rather than a private matter between wives and husbands in the nuclear family.⁴² Women were given more independence through paid work and, as mothers, were given some support from the state in the form maternal benefits and, later on, state-run childcare institutions.⁴³ However, these services were by no means complete. Tension and contradictions in the gender order of the Soviet state has been explained with regards to the fact that whilst a politics of social transformation was promoted, the gender roles of men and women were based on a traditional view of gender as deriving from a ‘natural’ difference between the sexes.⁴⁴

According to Ashwin, since the collapse of the Soviet regime, motherhood is no longer a state function and has been redefined as a private institution and responsibility, and even a pursuit to provide pleasure.⁴⁵ Also, the institutional underpinnings that guaranteed work for women outside the home are gone and state benefits that gave support to working mothers have been significantly reduced. The ‘official’ gender contract in Russia has been referred to as the

³⁹ Iarskaia-Smirnova, E., ‘Class and gender in Russian welfare policies : Soviet legacies and contemporary challenges’, Doctoral Thesis, Department of Social Work, University of Gothenburg, 2011, p. 23

⁴⁰ Ashwin, S., ‘Introduction’, in Ashwin, S. (ed.) *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 1

⁴¹ Issoupova, O., ‘From duty to pleasure? Motherhood in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia’, in Ashwin, S. (ed) *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, London: Routledge, 2000, Chapter 1, p. 33

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ashwin, S., op. cit., p. 1

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 11

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 19

‘dual-earner/state-female carer’ model, where both parents work as providers but women have the main responsibility for child-care, with some state support.⁴⁶ Whilst the welfare-state supports neofamilialist policies and ‘traditional’ gender relations have become more prevalent, there is high female labour force participation even amongst those with small children⁴⁷ and in 2002, 58% of children aged 0-7 years were enrolled in child-care institutions.⁴⁸ Women, however, are often relatively poorly paid and in everyday practice still tend to spend more time at home with children than fathers,⁴⁹ carrying the main burden of housework.⁵⁰

On an ideological level, the dominant discourse from the last decades of the Soviet era that championed women’s roles as mothers is still going strong⁵¹ but the Russian media and official rhetoric often promotes images of women as model housewives, rather than working wives and mothers.⁵² An essentialist view of gender, one that bases the different roles and qualities of men and women on natural and immutable differences between the sexes and one that underpinned the gender order of the Soviet regime, is still embraced by numerous Russian people today.⁵³ Thus when it comes to the role of women as mothers and the relationship between motherhood and fatherhood, the more ‘traditional’ pattern of gender relations that is becoming more prevalent in contemporary Russia is often explained with reference to essentialist logic,⁵⁴ with women being equated with the family in a caring role and men being at best secondary parents.⁵⁵ The ‘male breadwinner model’ is supported in the gender role attitudes of both men and women and whilst some ideological change has been noted in recent years, young men are more likely to support this traditional model and expect that most of the housework is carried out by women. Thus any rethinking of gender roles that is taking place in contemporary Russia is mainly being carried out by young women.⁵⁶

In relation to childrearing goals and practices both in the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia, research has been carried out as to the changes that took place leading

⁴⁶ Motiejunaite, A. and Kravchenko, Z., ‘Family policy, employment and gender-role attitudes: a comparative analysis of Russia and Sweden’, *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2008, p.46

⁴⁷ Teplova, T., ‘Welfare State Transformation, Childcare, and Women’s Work in Russia’, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2007, p. 316

⁴⁸ Motiejunaite, A. and Kravchenko, Z., op. cit., p. 41

⁴⁹ Kay, R., ‘‘I couldn’t live without my kids’: Fatherhood as a contested identity,’ in *Men in contemporary Russia. The Fallen Heroes of Post-Soviet Changes?* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, Chapter 5, p. 127

⁵⁰ Motiejunaite, A. and Kravchenko, Z., op. cit., p. 41

⁵¹ Bridger, S., ‘Image, Reality and Propaganda. Looking again at the Soviet Legacy’, in Haukanes, H. (ed.) *Women after Communism. Ideal images and real lives*, University of Bergen: Centre for Women’s Gender Research, 2001, Vol. 12, p. 24

⁵² White, A., ‘Gender Roles in Contemporary Russia: Attitudes and Expectations among Women Students’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 2005, p. 430

⁵³ Ibid., p. 13

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 13

⁵⁵ Kay, R., op. cit., p. 141

⁵⁶ White, A., op. cit., p. 432

up to the 1990s.⁵⁷ At a transitional time of rapid social change, traditional ideas about childrearing goals and values were placed in competition with new and more democratic ideals. Whilst traditional Soviet pedagogy had encouraged a single childrearing philosophy that instilled values of loyalty, obedience, group-mindedness and conformity, ie. those consistent with the ethos of a totalitarian socialist society, by the late 1980s there was widespread questioning of childrearing practices that encouraged an unquestioning acceptance of authority.⁵⁸ In Ispa's comparison of the childrearing ideas of mothers, teachers and students in both Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1991, she found that age and higher education of mothers led to more democratic childrearing values; ones that encouraged independent thought and inquisitiveness.⁵⁹ However, she also argued that a lesser economic stratification and a uniformity in childrearing beliefs in Soviet society could have influenced the fact that certain childrearing goals and ideas did not seem to vary to such a great extent. For example, the long tradition of belief in safeguarding the physical health of infants had remained more consistent over time and the importance of early stimulation for infants was a strong value that had been consistently supported.⁶⁰

Russian women in Norway

According to national statistics there were 19,414 people of Russian descent living in Norway at the beginning of 2015, the 11th largest immigrant population in the country.⁶¹ Immigration from Russia is gendered, with a large majority being women, and there is a strong tendency towards marriage migration.⁶² Russian women made up 72 percent of the Russian population in Norway in the year 2002 and, of these, 79 percent were married to Norwegian men, 12 percent to Russian men and seven percent to men of other nationalities.⁶³ They are one of the groups with the highest percentage of women being married to Norwegian men, together with women from Thailand, the Phillipines, Romania and Poland.⁶⁴ A large number of Russian immigrants have settled in the North of Norway where there is a border with Russia, but in the Bergen area where I conducted my research there are only 702 Russian immigrants,

⁵⁷ Ispa, J. M., 'Ideas about Infant and Toddler care among Russian Child Care Teachers, Mothers, and University Students', *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Vol. 10, 1995

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 360-362

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ 'Immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents', *Statistics Norway*, <http://www.ssb.no/befolkning/statistikker/innvbef>, (published 04/03/15, accessed 26/05/15)

⁶² Daugstad, G., *Grenseløs kjærlighet? Familieinnvandring og ekteskapsmønstre i det flerkulturelle Norge*, Oslo Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway, 2006

⁶³ Lie, B., 'Ekteskapsmønstre i det flerkulturelle Norge', *Statistisk Sentralbyrå*, Oslo: Kongsvinger, No. 1, 2004, p. 21

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 58

approximately 1.7 percent of the immigrant population in Bergen.⁶⁵

Previous research on Russian immigrant women in Norway has focused on the portrayal of Russian women in the media. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of the border between Norway and Russia there began a stream of migration into the North of Norway and, as discussed by Leontieva and Sarsenov, national identity at that time was still being discussed in terms of “east” and “west”.⁶⁶ Analysis of portrayals and stereotypes of Russian women in Norwegian newspapers shows that discussion of Russian women is centered on their sexuality or their marriage to Norwegian men, and these are linked to financial motives and economic discourse. Through this they are stigmatized and portrayed as ‘other’ in relation to Norwegian women.⁶⁷ A similar gendered, orientalist discourse, which has depicted Asian ‘post-order’ brides as ‘the exotic, the passive, the feminine “other”’, has also been observed in Western media’s focus on Russia in relation to the sexual and marriage relations.⁶⁸ In their work on postcolonialism in the Nordic countries, Mulinari et al. have raised the question of the relationship between postsocialism and postcolonialism, in light of feminist researchers arguing that Eastern and Central Europe has been ‘othered’ by Western Europe and represented as its ‘underdeveloped and dependent opposite’, both politically and discursively.⁶⁹

Further discourse analysis of North Norwegian newspaper articles by sociologist Anne-Britt Flemmen has pointed to the limited number of subject positions that are available to Russian women, namely the “prostitute”, but also the “Norwegian-married”, the “thief”, the “worker” and the “woman/mother”.⁷⁰ She has highlighted that Russian women are portrayed in general as victims in relation to various actors within the Norwegian context, but sometimes as active agents i.e. in their roles as highly-educated workers. Although there are clear contradictions in the way these women have been portrayed, there are generally negative undertones in much of what these scholars have found in the Norwegian media.

The status of Russian women as citizens within Norway, namely as marriage migrants, has been problematized by Lotherington and Fjørtoft who argue that they have been victims of both gender stereotyping and family reunification legislative exceptions.⁷¹ Their participation

⁶⁵ ‘Immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents’, op. cit.

⁶⁶ Leontieva, A. N. and Sarsenov, K., ‘Russiske kvinner i skandinaviske medier’, *Kvinne Forskning. Øst-Vest relasjoner: Europeisk integrasjon i et kjønnsperspektiv*, No. 2, 2003, p. 17-30

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 28

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 20

⁶⁹ Mulinari, D. et al., ‘Introduction: Post colonialism and the Nordic Models of Welfare and Gender’, in Keskinen, S et. al. (eds.) *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*, Abingdon, UK: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2009, p. 3

⁷⁰ Flemmen, A. B., ‘Russiske kvinner i nordnorske aviser – minoritets- og majoritetskonstruksjoner’, *Tidsskrift for kjønnforskning*, Vol. 31. No. 1, 2007, p. 37-54

⁷¹ Lotherington, A.T. and Fjørtoft, K., 2007, op. cit., p. 112

as equal citizens in both the private and public sphere of society is limited by public policies on marriage migration, which place them as dependents rather than independent equals. This manifests itself in immigrant often being initially financially dependent on their husbands, who become gatekeepers and providers of information about Norwegian society. It has also been argued that the power relations that Russian women find themselves in are varied in that they are by no means powerless actors within Norwegian society, but they are vulnerable in relation to the potential dominance of Norwegian husbands and authorities.⁷²

Transnational marriages between Norwegian men and Russian women have been researched by Flemmen, showing how Russian-Norwegian marriages are often viewed by Norwegian society as running counter to ideals of marriage, which should be based on legitimacy, parity and love.⁷³ An intersectional approach was used to explore how specific differences intersect in discourse on Russian-Norwegian couples, with these transnational marriages having a contested place within the power structures of the wider society. Lotherington has also studied Russian-Norwegian families and how Russian women establish their transformation from “immigrant” to being seen as “Norwegian” through constructions of gender equality within marriage relations.⁷⁴ In this research she explored how Russian women positioned themselves in relation to ideals of what it means to be Norwegian and stereotypes of “Russianness” that they faced within the Norwegian context, arguing that they often navigated their way through this by placing themselves in opposition to the situation of women and wives in Russia. In light of this, in my study I will be exploring the way in which my informants chose to position themselves in relation to both Norwegian and Russian women.

In light of the portrayal of ‘Russian women’ in the Norwegian media in a limited number of subject positions, it is important that these women are not treated as a homogeneous group in the Norwegian context and that intra-group differences are part of the discussion. In this study I will extend the body of research that has been carried out on Russian women in Norway, focusing on their positions as mothers, and allowing for a more agentive role to be explored. My study participants are educated, middle-class Russian women that have migrated for marriage, education and work prospects and this social class dimension will be taken into consideration of their status in Norwegian society as well as in their family context, and in relation to the nature of their experiences as immigrant mothers.

⁷² Lotherington, A. T. and Flemmen, A. B., ‘Ekteskapsmigrasjon i det norske maktfeltet’, *Sosiologi i Dag*, Vol. 37, No. 3-4, 2007, p. 76

⁷³ Flemmen, A. B., ‘Transnational Marriages - Empirical Complexities and Theoretical Challenges. An Exploration of Intersectionality’, *NORA. Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 2008, Vol. 16, No. 2. p. 114-129

⁷⁴ Lotherington, A. T., 2008, op. cit.

Chapter 3: Conceptual framework

In the following chapter I will discuss the concepts that will be used throughout this project in order to analyse and interpret my data in an effective way. By exploring the agency of motherhood, parenting styles in relation to culture, gender and social class, the construction of parenthood in relation to childhood, as well as cultural identity and acculturation, I will set out the conceptual framework that will inform my analysis.

Motherhood and Agency

Scholars of early second wave feminism aimed to make women aware that power and patriarchal domination is a part of motherhood as a social role and institution, and a source of women's oppression, hence 'used to define and confine them'.⁷⁵ They argued that essentialist views of women 'failed to separate the biological from the social' and thus confined them to their biological roles as mothers.⁷⁶ Focus shifted to the dynamics of mothering through analysing professional discourses on mothering and social institutions which controlled mothering practices but were shaped by men.⁷⁷ Then from what has been called the "repudiation" of motherhood came a movement of "recuperation" which attempted to 'reclaim and revise' maternity.⁷⁸ The seminal work 'Of woman born' by Adrienne Rich made the important distinction between the experience of mothering, which could be seen as positive and empowering, and the male-defined institution of motherhood.⁷⁹ This experiential aspect of mothering is now an important part of contemporary maternal studies, included as part of what Andrea O'Reilly has cited as the three main perspectives used to theorize motherhood: motherhood as experience/role, motherhood as institution/ideology, motherhood as identity/subjectivity.⁸⁰ These themes highlight the different dimensions of motherhood but it has been argued that making such a clear distinction between motherhood as "experience" and "institution" 'tends to obscure the interaction between subject and ideology' and to separate a pure form of maternal experience from overarching patriarchal institutions.⁸¹ Referring to 'mothering' has been a way of emphasizing the active nature of maternal practice within society's structures, which is particularly important in light of the fact that mothers have been

⁷⁵ Porter, M., O'Reilly, A. and Short, P. M., *Motherhood: power and oppression*, Toronto: Women's Press, 2005, p. 2

⁷⁶ Oakley, A., 'A case of maternity: Paradigms of women as maternity cases', *Signs*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1979

⁷⁷ Everingham, C., Everingham, C., *Motherhood and Modernity. An investigation into the rational dimension of mothering*, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1994, p. 14

⁷⁸ Jeremiah, E., op. cit., p. 22

⁷⁹ Porter, M., O'Reilly, A. and Short, P. M., Op. cit., p. 3

⁸⁰ O'Reilly, A., 'Introduction', in O'Reilly, A. (ed.) *Maternal Readings*, Bradford, CA: Demeter Press, 2007

⁸¹ Jeremiah, E., op. cit., p. 23

portrayed as passive and powerless according to traditional attitudes found in Western culture.⁸² Current research in this field strives to show that maternity is not a fixed and static state of being, that exists in some essentialist or isolated form, but instead is a set of ideas and behaviours that form part of active maternal practice and that are historically changeable.

It has also been noted that the particular form that parent-child relationships take varies cross-culturally and that it is important to see parent-child interactions as being not only culturally informed but also influenced by contextual location.⁸³ Evelyn Nakano Glenn has stressed the historical and social variation in mothering, arguing that like other relationships and institutions in a society mothering is socially constructed, and she has asserted that:

‘Mothering occurs within specific social contexts that vary in terms of material and cultural resources and constraints. How mothering is conceived, organized, and carried out is not simply determined by these conditions, however. Mothering is constructed through men’s and women’s actions within specific historical circumstances. Thus agency is central to an understanding of mothering as a social, rather than biological, construct.’⁸⁴

Thus weight is given not only to social structures and the realm of ideas and beliefs in a society but to the social interactions and relationships that are involved in shaping and defining mothering practice. Glenn has argued that women of all classes have not only been subjects of oppression in their roles as mothers but have also acted to assert their own standards of mothering and acquire the necessary resources to care for their children, and these aspects of mothering must also be taken into account.⁸⁵ Thus being aware of the historical and social specificity of mothering puts emphasis on the importance of social contexts and the agency of mothering in these contexts.

In this project I will be exploring the way in which the mothering role of my research participants is constructed through mothering practice and action taken. Since an understanding of motherhood as constructed must take into account the specific context in which this mothering takes place, the ideologies and social structures that are met with in the Norwegian context, as well as the resulting possibilities and limitations, will be part of the discussion. In addition, the social and cultural backgrounds of these women, including the ideas and ideals that they associate with mothering in their native country must also be taken into account. Thus the way in which motherhood is understood and practiced will be explored in

⁸² Ibid. p. 21-22

⁸³ Barn, R., ‘Parenting in a ‘Foreign’ climate: the Experiences of Bangladeshi Mothers in Multi-racial Britain’, in *Social Work in Europe*, Vol. 9, No.2, 2002, p. 29

⁸⁴ Glenn, E. N., ‘Social constructions of motherhood: A thematic overview’, in *Motherhood: ideology, experience and agency*, Routledge: London, 1994, p. 3

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 18

relation to both structure and agency; the social and institutional setting, the realm of culturally informed mothering values and beliefs and the maternal practice of my informants.

Parenting styles, practices and values

Through exploring concepts linked to parenting in more detail I aim to shed light on the approach to mothering adopted by the informants in my study. Darling and Steinberg described the interrelation between three levels of parenting: ‘the goals toward which socialization is directed; the parenting practices used by parents to help children reach those goals, and the parenting style, or emotional climate, within which socialization occurs.’⁸⁶ Parenting style as the overarching concept is defined as ‘a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and create an emotional climate in which the parent’s behaviours are expressed’, these attitudes being both goal-orientated parenting practices as well as behaviour that communicates a certain emotional approach.⁸⁷ Styles of parenting are thus influenced by parents’ goals and values as well as the nature of the parent-child relationship.

The concept of parenting style originated in the field of developmental psychology. Drawn from empirical findings in the United States, Baumrind identified a typology of three parenting styles: authoritative, permissive and authoritarian, which were based on control as a main function of parenting.⁸⁸ The approach taken was a configurative one where parents’ belief systems were taken into account and thus certain aspects and practices of parenting were seen as being configured into specific styles of parenting. In a further developed version of the typology, as inspired by the additions of Maccoby and Martin,⁸⁹ Baumrind incorporated the ‘demandingness’ and ‘responsiveness’ of parents as two processes reflected in parenting style:

‘*Responsiveness* refers to the extent to which parents foster individuality and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquiescent to children’s requests; it includes warmth, autonomy support and reasoned communication. *Demandingness* refers to the claims parents make on children to become integrated into society by behavior regulation, direct confrontation, and maturity demands (behavioral control) and supervision of children’s activities (monitoring).’⁹⁰

From the addition of these two dimensions of parenting, came the following descriptions of authoritative, permissive and authoritarian parenting styles:

⁸⁶ Darling, N. and Steinberg, L., ‘Parenting style as context: An integrative model’, *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 113, No. 3, 1993, p. 488

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 493

⁸⁸ Baumrind, D., ‘Effects of authoritative control on child behavior’, *Child Development*, Vol. 37, 1966, pp. 889-891

⁸⁹ Maccoby, E. E. and Martin J. A., ‘Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction’, in Mussen, P. H., (ed) and Hetherington, E. M. (vol. ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 4. Socialization, personality, and social development* (4th ed), New York: Wiley, 1983, pp. 1-101

⁹⁰ Baumrind, D., ‘Patterns of Parental Authority and Adolescent Autonomy’, *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, No, 108, 2005, pp. 61-62

‘*Authoritative* parents are both demanding and responsive. They monitor and impart clear standards for their children’s conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive or restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative. *Permissive* or non-directive parents are more responsive than they are demanding. They are non-traditional and lenient, do not require mature behaviour, allow considerable self-regulation and avoid confrontation. *Authoritarian* parents are demanding and directive, but not responsive. They are obedience- and status-orientated and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation. They provide an orderly environment and clear set of regulations and monitor their children’s activities carefully.’⁹¹

The table below gives an overview of Baumrind’s extended typology⁹², which also takes into account ‘directiveness’ and ‘intrusiveness’ in order to distinguish further between the three initial parenting styles:

Parenting style	Demandingness-responsiveness-intrusiveness ratio
Permissive (Non-directive/lenient)	Low demanding, high responsive, low intrusive
Democratic	Moderate demanding, high responsive, low intrusive
Authoritative	High demanding, high responsive, low intrusive
Authoritarian (Directive)	High demanding, low responsive, high intrusive

In this table, I have placed parenting styles going from most permissive/lenient (top) to most authoritarian/directive (bottom) in the left-hand column. In the right-hand column are the ratios of demandingness to responsiveness, also including intrusiveness, in order to visually display the combination of each in specific parenting styles. Thus it can be seen that the differences between Authoritative and Authoritarian parenting is the level of responsiveness and intrusiveness. Just as, whilst Permissive and Democratic styles are both lenient, the first involves less demanding behaviour than the latter.

The strength of this typology is that it creates a link between parenting practices, behaviours, beliefs and ideals, in order to develop cohesive parenting styles. Thus different parenting approaches can be compared not only in relation to specific parenting practices but also the emotional and ideological aspects of each style. Baumrind’s parenting typology has been applied and adapted to research in multiple academic fields, as well as in cross-cultural research, that takes it beyond the context in which it was initially developed. In this study the framework will be used as a heuristic device, something to ‘think with’ rather than simply

⁹¹ Baumrind, D., ‘Parenting styles and Adolescent Development’, in Brooks-Gunn, J., Lerner, R., and Petersen, A. C. (eds.), *The encyclopaedia of adolescence*, New York: Garland, 1991, p. 750

⁹² Baumrind, 2005, op. cit.

‘apply’, in order to interpret the way in which my informants chose to understand their own parenting styles in relation to those of mothers in both the Norwegian and Russian context.

Parenthood and childhood

‘The culturally positioned child’ has been discussed by Hennem, highlighting that the concept of the child is a category that follows a cultural repertoire of how one must act and be perceived in order to belong to the category ‘child’.⁹³ It has been noted that there is a strong link between how a society views ‘the child’ and a ‘proper childhood’ and the normative styles of parenting found in that society, as well as the nature of policies for parenting practices.⁹⁴ The distinction made between the ways in which John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau conceived of childhood has been cited widely, namely that Locke understood children as being born with a blank slate on which parents and society could transmit their values and beliefs, whereas Rousseau saw children as being born with an innate goodness and values that must be upheld and learned from.⁹⁵ From these two conceptions of ‘the child’ a contrast can be drawn between childhood as an incomplete state on the journey to adulthood, and childhood as a phase of life to be cherished and preserved as long as possible. These two conceptions can also be linked to traditions in childhood studies, namely the ‘socialization and developmental approach’ where children are seen as going through developmental stages and acquiring more and more cognitive skills,⁹⁶ and the ‘new sociology of childhood’ which gives more weight to children having agency and not simply being defined by their lack of adulthood.⁹⁷

Certain conceptions of the child can be linked to different societal notions of what children ‘need’ from the adults that are responsible for raising them. The widespread Western middle-class perception that childhood should be a fearless, happy and protected phase in a person’s life thus requires that ‘proper parenting’ supports this conception of a ‘happy childhood’ and enables favourable conditions in the upbringing of children.⁹⁸ However, the ‘cult of the sacred child’ has arguably led to over-indulgent and over-protective parenting.⁹⁹ In relation to the category ‘child’, it is important to note that this state of being situates children

⁹³ Hennem, N., ‘Kjærlighetens og autoritetens kulturelle koder. Om å være mor og far for norsk ungdom’, *NOVA-rapport*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2002, p. 67

⁹⁴ Thelen, T. and Haukanes, H., ‘Parenthood and Childhood: Debates within the Social Sciences’, in *Parenting After the Century of the Child. Travelling Ideals, Institutional Negotiations and Individual Responses*, Ashgate, 2010, Chapter 2, p. 14

⁹⁵ Spera, C., ‘A Review of the Relationship Among Parenting Practices, Parenting Styles, and Adolescent School Achievement’, in *Educational Psychology Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, June 2005, p. 125-6

⁹⁶ Thelen, T. and Haukanes, H., op. cit., p. 17

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 19

⁹⁸ Hennem, N., 2002, op. cit.

⁹⁹ Lancy, D. F., *The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel and Changelings*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 149

in a structure of power, which in the hierarchy of most societies around the world places children under adults.¹⁰⁰ Thus in the relationship between mother and child, the position of each party both within the structures of authority in the family and in relation to the cultural norms and discourse on individuals' rights in the wider social context should be considered.¹⁰¹

As part of Baumrind's typology of parenting styles mentioned above, the two dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness in parenting have been interpreted as the willingness of parents to act as socializing agents, reflecting the demands made by society on the parents, and the parent's recognition of the child's individuality, reflecting demands made by the child on society.¹⁰² This interpretation reflects the balance between control and autonomy that Baumrind discusses in relation to authoritative parenting¹⁰³, which arguably aims to find a mid-way between accommodating societal demands and allowing for the agentive capacity of children. The link between ideas of childhood and how these correspond to appropriate parenthood are thus shown in the underlying goals and beliefs on which certain parenting styles are based, and in this project I will explore the ways in which my informants conceive of their mothering style in relation to their ideas of childhood.

Parenting styles: culture, gender and social class

Not only have there been identified patterns in the dominant parenting approaches found in different countries around the world, but these patterns have been linked to various factors including economic equality/inequality, modernity and industrialization.¹⁰⁴ From an anthropological perspective on childhood, Lancy has pointed to the 21st century transition to parents now being the main carers for children and to a much more interactive and demanding parent-child relationship.¹⁰⁵ Tendencies for Western parenting practice in the modern era are seen to include early stimulation of children's physical and intellectual development which is now part of preparation for the demands of 'Western-style education and employment'.¹⁰⁶ An important part of this is the teaching element of parenting where verbal interaction is

¹⁰⁰ Hennem, N., 2002, op. cit., p. 68

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 68

¹⁰² Darling, N. and Steinberg, L., op. cit., p. 492

¹⁰³ Baumrind, D., 'Parental disciplinary patterns and social competence in children', *Youth and Society*, Vol. 9, 1978, pp. 239-276

¹⁰⁴ Doepke, M. and Zilibotti, F., 'Parenting with Style: Altruism and Paternalism in Intergenerational Preference Transmission', *NBER Working Paper Series*, National Bureau of Economic Research: Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 2014

¹⁰⁵ Lancy, D. F., op. cit., p. 145

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 145-152

encouraged and informal education becomes part of the ideal standard in the relationship between parents and their children.¹⁰⁷

Alwin has pointed to an historical trend in the valuing of independence over obedience which reflects the broader social changes as the Western world has become more secularized and encouraging of individual autonomy.¹⁰⁸ Also, according to Ispa there is much cross-cultural evidence that socioeconomic status and educational level influences childrearing goals and beliefs and that parents with lower socioeconomic status put greater emphasis on obedience training and give less value to qualities of inquisitiveness and autonomy in their children than do parents with middle socioeconomic status.¹⁰⁹

In a recent rapport concerned with how parenting styles are shaped by economic conditions in countries around the world, Doepke and Zilibotti argued that authoritative methods are used more frequently in educated families, whereas less educated parents are more prone to resort to authoritarian methods, which are linked respectively with the encouragement of independence and obedience in child behaviour.¹¹⁰ They charted the popularity of permissive parenting practices (anti-authoritarian parenting) in the 1960s and 70s and the new trend towards more engaged and intrusive parenting in recent decades, which is authoritative in style and rejects the more authoritarian practices of the past.¹¹¹ In order to gain more information about how this trend is manifested in Norway and Russia, I have studied in more detail the data from the 5th wave of the World Value Surveys, 2005-2009, which measured attitudes or values emphasized by parents in childrearing. I found that 90% of Norwegian parents saw “independence” as being an important quality for their children, whilst only 41.3% of Russian parents held the same value. 54.6% of Norwegian parents saw “imagination” as important as opposed to 14.2% of Russian parents and regarding the value of “hard-working” children, only 12.7% of Norwegian in comparison with 88.6% of Russian parents viewed this as important. “Obedience” however was viewed in a similar way in these two countries, with only 28.7% of Norwegian and 37.9% of Russian parents emphasizing it over other values.¹¹² The values emphasized in Norway can thus be linked to a more permissive (or democratic) style of parenting, whilst those in Russia are more in line with an authoritative style.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 151-152

¹⁰⁸ Alwin, D. F., ‘From Obedience to Autonomy: Changes in Traits Desired in Children, 1924-1978’, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 1988, pp. 33-52

¹⁰⁹ Ispa, J. M., op. cit., p. 360

¹¹⁰ Doepke, M. and Zilibotti, F., op. cit., p. 26

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 4

¹¹² ‘World value survey wave 5: 2005-2009’, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>, (accessed 03/05/15)

Authoritative parenting has been linked to a new model of intensive parenting that has been referred to as “helicopter parenting”, since parents are seen to ‘hover’ over their children to monitor and protect them.¹¹³ A significant gendered aspect of more intensive parenting practice has also been highlighted since ‘the prevailing ideology in western parenting culture emphasizes intensive mothering’.¹¹⁴ This gendered model was first introduced as ‘intensive mothering’ by Hays, who described it as the expectation that mothers should spend an enormous amount of time and energy in raising their children.¹¹⁵ This model of socially appropriate mothering practice is ‘child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive’.¹¹⁶ According to this ideology, mothers are to be self-sacrificing and put the care and needs of their children before their own.¹¹⁷

As well as the gender dimension of parenting style, the influence of social class has also been explored. According to Lancy there are two things that matter a great deal in determining parenting style and the outcome for children: family income and the mother’s education.¹¹⁸ This class dimension of parenting practice has been explored by Lareau, who has argued that ‘parents differ by class in the ways they define their own roles in their children’s lives as well as in how they perceive the nature of childhood’.¹¹⁹ In the context of black and white families in the US, this class dimension was understood as forming two cultural logics of childrearing: ‘concerted cultivation’ where middle-class parents put in effort so that their children are stimulated mentally and their talents are developed, and the ‘accomplishment of natural growth’ where lower class parents allow their children to develop without being too involved.¹²⁰ Vincent and Ball, in their findings on the ‘making up’ of middle class children in England, drew links between the parents’ preoccupation with child development through ‘enrichment’ activities and the classed and gendered aspects of their parenting, finding that in the eyes of middle-class mothers a child was seen as ‘a project – soft, malleable and able to be developed and improved, with the ‘good’ parent presenting a myriad of opportunities and support for the child to have a range of learning experiences.’¹²¹ Both studies found a classed

¹¹³ Doepke, M. and Zilibotti, F., op. cit., p. 25-26

¹¹⁴ Santos, G. G., ‘Narratives about Work and Family Life among Portuguese Academics’, *Gender, Work & Organization*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2015, p. 1999

¹¹⁵ Hays, S., *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, Yale University, 1996

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8

¹¹⁷ Santos, G. G., op. cit., p. 1999

¹¹⁸ Lancy, D. F., op. cit., p. 149

¹¹⁹ Lareau, A., ‘Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families’ *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 67, No. 5, 2002, p. 748

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Vincent, C. and Ball, S. J., ‘Making Up’ the Middle-Class Child: Families, Activities and Class Dispositions’, in *Sociology*, Vol. 41, No. 6, 2007, p. 1065

and gendered pattern in relation to parenting practices and thus in relation to an authoritative parenting style. It could be argued that mothering practices that involve demandingness in the form of directed socialization and preference formation are exemplified in this research. The parenting style of a middle-class, educated western mother is thus posited as being more inclined towards an authoritative and involved model of mothering.

Gendered parenthood

As part of this research, I will also be looking into the concept of gendered parenthood which is very much interlinked with how both motherhood and fatherhood are mutually conceived of in a given society. It has been stated that ‘mothers’ and fathers’ practices are generated in the interplay of policies, economic structures, cultural norms and historic trajectories¹²² and the construction of gendered parental responsibilities and meanings attached to parenthood are thus not only produced and reproduced within the domain of the family but are also largely part of the wider gender order of a society.¹²³

A link has been identified between the modern state and the proliferation of family policies, e.g. the regulation of reproduction and childbirth, the care of children and the work/family balance.¹²⁴ According to Ellingsæter, ‘different family policy measures imply institutional support for particular family models’¹²⁵ and thus, in relation to gendered parenthood, there are both policies and discourse that are ideologically informed and that shape the normative ideas of how providing for the family and bringing up children is to be divided between mother and father. Traditional understandings of gendered parenting roles are based on the ideal of the male-breadwinner and female-carer, where the father has responsibility for providing for the family, whilst the mother is the primary care-giver and has responsibility for the household. These gendered parental roles have altered to various degrees in modern societies built on ideals of gender equality and a more democratic family model, and it has become more socially accepted and expected that both father and mother will take responsibility for paid and unpaid work. This is shown in research on the changing nature of fatherhood and the image of the ‘new father’ being nurturing and involved in both child care and housework.¹²⁶ However, as argued by Ellingsæter, it is important to be aware of the interplay between ideals of gendered parenting in a society and the reality of what takes place

¹²²Ellingsæter, A. L. and Leira, A., op. cit., p. 5

¹²³ Thelen, T. and Haukanes, H., op. cit., p. 12

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 14

¹²⁵ Ellingsæter, A. L., 2003, op. cit., p. 419

¹²⁶ Brandth, B. and Kvande, E., 1998, op. cit., p. 294

in every-day practice. Thus, whilst ideology in society indicates more gender equality, there is often shown to be a persistence of traditional gender norms in the allocation of domestic duties. On average, women continue to take primary responsibility for domestic and care responsibilities.

With regards to gendered parenting practice in the Norwegian context, my understanding of gender in this study will initially be based on the balance between the gender structures of society and the agency of individuals in their gendered practice. In addition to this and in line with the ‘doing’ of gender according to West and Zimmerman,¹²⁷ an interactionist perspective will be utilized which understands gender as being constituted on an everyday basis in the interaction between husband and wife, mother and father, in negotiations about work, child-care and housework.¹²⁸ Thus the interplay between structure and agency, socio-cultural norms and everyday practice will be a part of the discussion as to how the women in this study have constructed their motherhood both in the context of their family and Norwegian society.

In relation to my project I will be exploring the way in which my informants conceive of their roles as mothers in relation to that of their husbands as fathers, which will bring their understandings of motherhood in relation to fatherhood and patterns of gendered parenting to the fore. Through exploration of the way in which work, child-care and housework is divided between mother and father, I will be exploring the gendered division of labour in the household and the mothering role of my informants in relation to their culturally formed expectations and the reality of their everyday practice.

Acculturation and cultural identity

Acculturation has been defined as ‘a process that entails contact between two cultural groups, which results in numerous cultural changes in both parties.’¹²⁹ Psychological acculturation refers to changes in identity, values, behaviour and attitudes as a result of contact with another culture, namely on the individual level.¹³⁰ The psychologist John W. Berry’s theory of acculturation has often been used as a basis to understand these intercultural changes in the form of acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation.¹³¹ The process of acculturation as part of each of these strategies has been seen in relation to two

¹²⁷ West, C. and Zimmerman, D. H., ‘Doing Gender’, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1987, pp. 125-151

¹²⁸ Brandth, B. and Kvande, E., 1998, op. cit., p. 296

¹²⁹ Berry, J. W., ‘A psychology of Immigration’, *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 2001, p. 616

¹³⁰ Ferdman, B. M. and Horenczyk, G., ‘Cultural Identity and Immigration: Reconstructing the Group During Cultural Transmission’, in Olshtain, E. and Horenczyk, G. (eds.) *Language, Identity and Immigration*, The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2000

¹³¹ Berry, J. W., op. cit.

key dimensions that are mutually exclusive: the adoption of ideals and practices from the receiving culture, and retention of heritage culture ideals and practices.¹³² Thus an assimilation strategy involves the adoption of and strong orientation towards the cultural practices and values of the receiving culture and the lack of retention of one's native cultural practices. Integration involves the incorporation of certain ideals of practices of the receiving culture into one's native cultural understanding, combining elements of both cultures. A separation strategy refers largely to the rejection of the cultural practices of the receiving culture and strong allegiance to one's native culture, and marginalisation is detachment from and rejection of the practices of both 'cultural groups'.¹³³

Conceptions of culture and cultural identity have been critiqued by post-modernist scholars in that they often portray culture as a fixed entity and lead to the stereotyping people from a given 'culture' or 'cultural group' as being overly similar.¹³⁴ Culture has thus been described as 'something that is invented, reinvented, and sustained by people in personally meaningful ways within the political terrain that frames their lives'.¹³⁵ This understanding of culture as dynamic is also posited by Ferdman and Horenczyk who have highlighted that aspects of culture are not static or fixed but rather in a continuous state of transformation.¹³⁶ They have referred to the work of Liebkind who asserted that signs and symbols as elements of culture can be transformed or take on new functions or meanings in the case of intra- and intergroup contact.¹³⁷ Thus the concept of cultural identity has been used as part of approaches to understanding acculturation in that it can refer to 'a complex set of beliefs and attitudes that people have about themselves in relation to their culture group membership; usually these come to the fore when people are in contact with another culture, rather than when they live entirely within a single culture'.¹³⁸

I am adopting the premise that cultures are not fixed entities but are constantly changing, and that identification with a 'cultural group' is contingent on which aspects of culture are deemed as constitutive by each individual that identifies them self as being part of that group. Ferdman and Horenczyk have referred to both the group level and the individual level of cultural understanding, where each person will have their own theory of the group

¹³² Ferdman, B. M. and Horenczyk, G., op. cit., p. 83

¹³³ Berry, J. W., op. cit.

¹³⁴ Gjerde, P. F., 'Culture, Power and Experience: Toward a Person-Centered Cultural Psychology', *Human Development*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2004, pp. 138-157

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 153

¹³⁶ Ferdman, B. M. and Horenczyk, G., op. cit., p. 84

¹³⁷ Liebkind, 1992, in Ibid., p. 85

¹³⁸ Berry, J. W., op. cit. p. 620

culture, which is not necessarily complete or static.¹³⁹ Cultural identity can therefore be conceptualised as ‘one’s individual image of the behaviours, beliefs, values and norms – in short, the cultural features that characterize one’s group(s), together with one’s feelings about those features and one’s understanding of how they are (or are not) reflected in oneself.’¹⁴⁰ However, in the context of immigration, it has been noted that certain aspects of a culture may become more or less important as signifiers of a particular cultural identity.¹⁴¹ The cultural identity of an individual will thus be dependent on what she understands as the defining cultural features of her ‘heritage culture’, what she recognises as the cultural norms of the context in which she is living, and the extent to which she identifies with these different cultural features.

In this study of immigrant mothers bringing up children in Bergen, I have selected Russian informants in order to have a group of interviewees with a degree of similarity in social and cultural background. However, sensitivity will be shown throughout interpretation and analysis in order to avoid cultural essentialism and assumptions about the ‘Russianness’ of my informants, allowing for nuances, complexities and contradictions in my data material to be part of the discussion. Thus in this study I will be exploring how my informants chose to place themselves in relation to a “Russian” and “Norwegian” cultural identity, as they themselves chose to define them, and to what extent these identities were even relevant for them. With the use of the concept of cultural identity and acculturation, I will explore how these mothers define and view their own cultural identity in relation to that of their children and the degree of importance that Russian cultural features may have for these mothers in bringing up their children in the Norwegian context

¹³⁹ Ferdman, B. M. and Horencyk, G., op. cit

¹⁴⁰ Ferdman, B. M. and Horencyk, G, op. cit., p. 86

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 86

Chapter 4: Literature Review

In this chapter I will review relevant research on immigrant parenting. Due to the limited number of studies on the lives of Russian mothers in Norway, I will be focusing mostly on other relevant research on immigrant motherhood in the Norwegian context and also studies on immigrant parenting, especially immigrant mothering, in other contexts around the world that speak to the topics of my study. Previous research on immigrant parenting has explored amongst other things the nature of and interplay between acculturation, parenting styles and practices, ethnic cultural retention and transmission, and inter-generational relations. From this, challenges and coping strategies have been identified and examined, especially in relation to intercultural and intergenerational conflict.¹⁴² The effects of certain acculturation strategies and parenting styles on the well-being of the children of immigrant parents have been explored widely, as well as effects of the “acculturation gap” between generations¹⁴³ and the “acculturation stress” that can affect both parents and their children.¹⁴⁴ In this research project, however, I will be focusing more the way in which parenting is constructed by immigrant mothers in relation to context, cultural practices, gender relations and social class. The main aspects that will be covered in this chapter will be acculturation and parenting approaches, cultural retention and transmission, acculturation and transnationalism, and gender roles and social class, all in relation to the context of immigrant parenting.

Acculturation and parenting approaches

It has been noted that there is an increasing interest in parenting being understood in the context of culture.¹⁴⁵ Wilson, S. et. al. have studied parenting styles both culturally and cross-culturally and base their collection of research on the premise that the relationship between parent and child is shaped in important ways by culture and that this relationship not only socializes the child for a particular cultural environment but it also serves as ‘an interpersonal arena for cultural change’.¹⁴⁶ Ochocka and Janzen also support the idea that parenting practices are

¹⁴² Roer-Strier, D., ‘In the mind of the beholder: Evaluation of coping styles of Immigrant parents’, *International Migration*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 1997, pp. 271-288

¹⁴³ Ho, J., ‘Acculturation gaps in Vietnamese immigrant families: Impact on family relationships’, *International Journal of Intercultural relations*, Vol. 34, 2010, pp. 22-23

¹⁴⁴ Berry, J. W., *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁵ Ochocka, J. and Janzen, R., ‘Immigrant Parenting a New Framework of Understanding’, *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, Vol. 6, No.1, 2008, p. 87

¹⁴⁶ Wilson, S. et al., *Parent-Youth Relations: Cultural and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012, pp. 8-9

subject to cultural differences and argue that when discussing parenting the socio-cultural context should be taken into account.¹⁴⁷ However, they have also stressed the importance of not basing one's understanding of immigrant parenting on cultural influences alone. Rather, using a dynamic notion of culture, parenting styles should be understood as evolving over time, especially in the case of immigrant parents who may adapt their parenting style and adopt parenting practices of the receiving country.¹⁴⁸

It has been argued that the acculturation strategies adopted by immigrant parents will influence their approaches to childrearing in the host country.¹⁴⁹ According to some, the degree to which the parenting practices of immigrants reflect culture-specific parenting styles will be particularly influenced by their attitude towards childrearing practices in the new context.¹⁵⁰ However, it has also been argued that culturally significant parenting values are often some of the most deep-seated beliefs and can therefore be quite resistant to change in the context of immigration.¹⁵¹ Thus the link between acculturation and parenting strategies is not necessarily straight forward.

Bornstein and Cote have compared the acculturation approaches of Japanese and South American immigrant mothers in the US.¹⁵² By studying the multiple parenting cognitions (attributions and self-perceptions) of these mothers, they found that different aspects of mothering can acculturate in different ways. In comparing two different acculturating groups, they found that there was variation in the nature of acculturation both between and within immigrant groups. This was in relation to specific aspects of parenting, such as the role of parental ability and effort, perhaps due to the nature of cultural differences and the adaptability of certain parenting practices.¹⁵³ They thus highlighted the importance of taking into account the many different aspects of parenting in the context of acculturation and of not generalizing about the acculturation process for groups of immigrants.

Huang and Lamb have researched Chinese immigrants in London, finding that there was a link between cultural identification and parenting approach.¹⁵⁴ The study participants all

¹⁴⁷ Ochocka, J. and Janzen, R., op. cit. p. 87

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 88

¹⁴⁹ Nesteruk, O. and Marks, L. D., op. cit., p. 811

¹⁵⁰ Buki, L. P., Ma, T.-C., Strom, R. D. and Strom, S. K., 'Chinese immigrant mothers of adolescents: Self-perceptions of acculturation effects on parenting', *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, Vol 9, No. 2, 2003, pp. 127-140

¹⁵¹ LeVine, R. A., 'Human parental care: Universal goals, cultural strategies, individual behavior', *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, Vol. 40, 1988, pp. 3-12

¹⁵² Bornstein, M. H. and Cote, L. R., 'Mothers' Parenting Cognitions in Cultures of Origin, Acculturating Cultures, and Cultures of destination', in *Child Development*, Vol. 75, No. 1, Jan/Feb 2004, pp. 221-235

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 232

¹⁵⁴ Huang, C.-Y. and Lamb, M. E., 'Acculturation and Parenting in First-Generation Chinese Immigrants in the UK', *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2015, pp. 150-167

identified strongly with a Chinese cultural identity and the stronger this was, the more Chinese-specific parenting practices were endorsed. However, whilst the length of time spent in the UK had not had an effect on their affiliation with Chinese culture, it had influenced the actual parenting practices of these immigrants, increasing their affiliation with certain aspects of the parenting culture but not influencing their identification with many features of Chinese culture.¹⁵⁵ The link made between acculturation and parenting practice in these first-generation immigrants showed that the relationship between cultural features of the country of origin and the new context were seen as somewhat separate.

However, in Remennick's research on the intercultural relationships between Russian immigrant men and women and Native Israelis she found that there was a 'relentless drift towards the hegemonic cultural identity and lifestyle' for Russia immigrant spouses and that this was often at the expense of losing touch with their culture of origin.¹⁵⁶ Also, the one-sidedly Israeli-Hebrew socialization of children in these families indicated that there was an imbalance of power in the ability of Russian parents to follow Russian cultural parenting practices and values as opposed to those of their spouses and the wider Israeli context. The significance of the cultural background of spouses on extent to which immigrant mothers followed their native cultural values and beliefs was also highlighted in research by Liamputtong and Naksook on Thai women as mothers in Australia.¹⁵⁷ Those with Anglo-Australian spouses sometimes had difficulty reconciling their traditional Thai childrearing practices with those expected by their husbands and, since differences were considerable, it would often result in them gradually giving-up their cultural practices.

In light of these findings, I intend to examine the parenting approaches of my informants from both a cultural and contextual perspective. I will be taking into account the approach to acculturation adopted by my study participants in relation to parenting style as well as specific aspects of parenting. The importance of the cultural influences in their parenting practices and values, as well as the cultural background of their spouses, will be considered in the context of immigrant parenting.

Gender roles and social class

It has been highlighted that whilst there is extensive research on immigrant families, focus on

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 161

¹⁵⁶ Remennick, L., 'Exploring Intercultural Relationships: A Study of Russian Immigrants Married to Native Israelis', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 5, 2009, pp. 719-738

¹⁵⁷ Liamputtong, P. and Naksook, C., 'Life as mothers in a new land: The experience of motherhood among Thai women in Australia', *Health Care for Women International*, Vol. 24, 2003, pp. 650-668

immigrant motherhood has been quite limited.¹⁵⁸ Tummala-Narra has explored the gendered aspects of immigrant parenting, namely the changing conceptions of gender roles, bicultural conflicts, and changes in family structure and social networks.¹⁵⁹ She has argued that motherhood dilemmas are often magnified by cultural displacement. Also, in looking at the experience of women becoming first-time mothers in a new context she points to the fact that there may be ‘a resurgence of memories and associations with one’s own maternal figures and of the parenting values and traditions embedded in one’s cultural routes.’¹⁶⁰ Thus in the act of becoming a mother women may look to familiar cultural points of reference regarding gender roles, and this could have heightened importance for first-time mothers in a new cultural context.

Regarding the relationship between immigrant mothers and their husbands, some studies of Asian immigrant mothers have shown that the more traditional pattern of gender relations in their native country may pose significant challenges in the context of immigration.¹⁶¹ The division of paid labour and household duties in the new context may not play out according to expected gender roles due to social, cultural and economic factors and thus this can cause problems and tensions within immigrant families. However, as well as numerous works that have covered the struggles and coping strategies of immigrant parents, research has been carried out that explores the positive change that can be a part of this process. According to Rolls and Chamberlain, immigration to Western societies can for some Asian women lead to new forms of independence due to opportunities to work outside the home and to challenge the patriarchal family structure, allowing for increased power to make decisions in the family.¹⁶² This argument could also be extended to other immigrant mothers from societies with more traditional patterns of gender relations.

The challenges faced by professional immigrant women and their dual-income families in relation to the gendered division of labour has been researched by George, who has looked at the situation for Indian Christian nurses in the US.¹⁶³ The traditional pattern of gender relations in their native state of Kerala was the main point of reference for these families in

¹⁵⁸ Sigad, L. I. and Eisikovits, R. A., ‘Migration, Motherhood, Marriage: Cross-cultural adaptation of North American Immigrant Mothers in Israel’, *International Migration*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2009, p. 67

¹⁵⁹ Tummala-Narra, P., ‘Mothering in a Foreign Land’, *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 2004

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170

¹⁶¹ Moon, S., ‘Immigration and Mothering: Case studies from two generations of Korean Immigrant women’, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 6, 2003, pp. 840-860

¹⁶² Rolls, C. and Chamberlain, M., ‘From east to west: Nepalese women’s experiences’, *International Nursing Review*, No. 54, 2004, pp. 176-184

¹⁶³ George, S. M., ‘Gendered Ideologies and Strategies: The Negotiation of the Household Division of Labor among Middle-class South Asian American families’, *Working paper No. 8*, April 1999

relation to the division of household work, child care and financial decision making and George has analysed the way in which they negotiated, challenged and transformed conventional gender practices and discourses in their new context. Findings showed that whilst some households had remained more traditional, in others men were forced to help with household tasks due to the participation of women in the labour market and the lack of extended family for child care support. There were also partnership households where women had demanded more gender equality of their husbands, having been influenced by gender relations in American society, and where men had altered their gender practices as well as their gender ideologies in order to fit in with the new context.¹⁶⁴

It has been argued that the parenting styles and practices of immigrant parents can vary depending on socio-economic status, educational status and the amount of time spent in the host country¹⁶⁵ A link has also been made between the high level of education and employment status of immigrants and the ease with which they adapt to the host society, as well as their sense of well-being.¹⁶⁶ Nesteruk and Marks have researched the situation for immigrant professionals from Eastern European countries living in the United States, finding that these immigrants as a whole adjusted relatively rapidly to the host society, being able to cope well with the demands of immigration and gain a good understanding of the functioning of their new social and cultural context.¹⁶⁷ In relation to childrearing approaches, they have asserted that these immigrants were able to critically assess the parenting practices and values found both in the United States and in their countries of origin; to ‘negotiate and modify’ their own parenting practices and find a ‘balanced compromise’ in relation to praise, discipline and freedom.¹⁶⁸ They thus took an integrative approach to acculturation with regards to their parenting, choosing to retain some of their native values and also adopt new ones. Additionally, it is noted that the cultural reference points that they referred to were based on recollections of their countries of origin from a generation earlier that did not take into account the changes that had taken part in Eastern Europe since they had emigrated. This aspect of immigrant parenting will be taken up in my research when exploring what the cultural reference points of my own informants were and how they may have changed over time. Also, in light of the argued

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 55-57

¹⁶⁵ Jambunathan, S., ‘Comparisons of Parenting attitudes among five ethnic groups in the United States’, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2000

¹⁶⁶ Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R. G., *Immigrant America: A Portrait*, University of California Press, 2006, p. 203

¹⁶⁷ Nesteruk, O, and Marks, L. D., op. cit., p. 810

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 823

influence of gender and social class in these studies, I will be giving weight to the influence of these factors on the situations of my study participants.

Cultural identity and culture transmission

According to Iman et al., immigration poses significant challenges for parents since in the context of immigration parenting becomes a ‘complex interplay between enculturation (ie. socialization within one’s ethnic culture) and acculturation (ie. socialization to the dominant culture).’¹⁶⁹ In researching the situation of Asian Indian parents in the US, they have explored the impact of immigration on retention of ethnic identity and the ability to promote a sense of ethnic identity in second generation children.¹⁷⁰ These parents had selectively acculturated and recognised the need to nurture biculturalism in their children, seen as a strength but also a struggle to negotiate conflicting cultural demands. In the transmission of cultural values and practices certain features were prioritized, especially in relation to language, marriage and social network. Strategies for imparting Indian cultural knowledge that were typically used by mothers were taking their children to cultural programmes and reading Indian books and effort was put into maintaining priorities in transmitting specific values. However, the aim for their children to succeed in the new context was seen overall as having higher importance than the transmission of native culture.¹⁷¹

In relation to immigrant mothers’ own cultural identities, the desire of mothers to teach their children their native language and cultural traditions has been understood as part of the attempt to reconnect with their own culture of origin.¹⁷² Thus through the transmission of culture mothers are able to reinforce the importance that specific cultural features have for their own sense of cultural identity, as well as that of their children. In Remennick’s study on Russian-Israeli marriages, as discussed above, she also explored the complex relationship between cultural identity and culture transmission in the context of immigration. She found that whilst some Russian immigrant fathers and mothers had aimed to embrace an Israeli identity and lifestyle, others had intended to maintain their Russian roots and pass on Russian language and other cultural features to their children. The difficulty of maintaining a bicultural approach, however, was highlighted in the fact that these immigrant parents often felt that they were competing with the influence of the hegemonic culture, especially when their children

¹⁶⁹ Inman, A. G. et al., ‘Cultural Transmission: Influence of contextual factors in Asian Indian Immigrant Parents’ Experiences’, *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2007, p. 93

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Tummala-Narra, P., op. cit.

had started school, and this force was felt both in relation to their own behaviour as well as that of their children.¹⁷³ Thus in relation to my research, I will be discussing the relationship between my informants' own sense of cultural identity and the way in which this may be interlinked with the behaviour, cultural traditions and values that they wish to transmit to their children. I will also take into account the significance of cultural diversity and the influence of aspects of the hegemonic culture, as defined by my informants, on the lives of themselves and their children.

Acculturation and Transnationalism

Cross-cultural adaptation has been used as a general term to include the wide spectrum of possible responses that an immigrant can have to the new cultural context.¹⁷⁴ Sigad and Eisikovits have explored the transnational orientation of North American immigrant mothers in Israel and in looking at the cross-cultural adaptation patterns of these women they have found that whilst most models of acculturation assume that links with native cultural features occur within the environment of the immigrant's host society, this did not reflect the reality of the experiences of the women in her study.¹⁷⁵ They highlighted the fact that many immigrants are in contact with their countries of origin in several spheres, including social, political, familial, cultural and economic, and have used the term transnationalism to refer to immigrants that are active in two cultures simultaneously, maintaining cross-border relationships.¹⁷⁶ In order to allow for a full range of behaviours in relation to cross-cultural adaptation, they have proposed the incorporation of transnationalism, ie. transnationalist behaviours, into Berry's model of acculturation (integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization). Thus in relation to immigrant parenting the attitude of the mothers towards the host society can be seen as separate from their connection to their country of origin, and modes of cultural-adaptation, such as an integrationist or separatist strategy, can be combined with different forms of transnationalist behaviour.¹⁷⁷ This approach arguably adds complexity to the relationship that both mothers and children can have with the receiving society and the country from which the mother originates, as well as to the mother-child relationship in itself. In my project I will be utilising this approach to achieve a nuanced insight into the nature of my informants' and their children's connections

¹⁷³ Remennick, L., p. 727-731

¹⁷⁴ Sigad, L. I. and Eisikovits, R. A., 'Migration, Motherhood, Marriage: Cross-cultural adaptation of North American Immigrant Mothers in Israel', *International Migration*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2009, p. 64

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-100

¹⁷⁶ Sigad, L. I. and Eisikovits, R. A., *op. cit.*, p. 69

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89

to both Norway and Russia and the role that cultural retention and transmission plays in the mother-child relationship.

Immigrant mothering in Norway

Existing studies on immigrant mothers in Norway have looked at the complexities and challenges of immigrant motherhood in the Norwegian institutional and ideological context. Grøtteland's study on the way in which women from ethnic minority backgrounds have shaped their positions as mothers in Norway explored how these women gave meaning to this role.¹⁷⁸ She highlighted the variation in the way that these mothers formulated their motherhood and the influence of context on how they understood their day-to-day actions as mothers.

In her study on Somalian and Pakistani mothers in Norway, Savosnick explored the strategies they employed in order to cope with challenges of language, being in a foreign culture, changes in family structure and feelings of loneliness.¹⁷⁹ These mothers had taken part in a parenting course as part of the ICDP (International Child Development Programme) in Norway and after this guidance the mothers had continued to support 'typical collectivist socializing values' in their child-rearing, such as loyalty, obedience and respect, but several of the mothers moved from a more authoritarian to a more authoritative parenting style.¹⁸⁰ Fjeld's study of Latin-American motherhood in the Norwegian context also found that immigrant mothers adopted a combination of mothering values and practices. She explored how her informants formulated their motherhood in a country with an ideology of gender equality that is quite different to the more 'traditional' gender ideology that is expected in Latin America.¹⁸¹ The mothers created a 'hybridization' of motherhood based on aspects of both Latin American and Norwegian childrearing practices and norms and in relation to the ideology of gender equality in the Norwegian context, a successful sharing of household tasks based on appreciation and flexibility challenged the assumption that gender equality must be equated with a 50-50 division of labour. Overall, the women in these two studies were able to construct their motherhood in a way that combined different practices and values associated with childrearing both in their native country and the host society, adopting and challenging certain beliefs and values in both contexts.

Previous literature on Russian women in Norway has discussed their position as citizens

¹⁷⁸ Grøtteland, E., *Kontekstuelt Moderskap – en studie av utforming av moderskap blant kvinner med etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn*, Masteroppgave i sosialt arbeid, Høgskolen i Oslo, 2009

¹⁷⁹ Savosnick, S., 'Det er vanskelig å være mor i Norge': Oppdragelse i et flerkulturelt perspektiv', Masters Oppgave

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 78-79

¹⁸¹ Fjeld, Å. K. W., *Latinamerikansk moderskap i en norsk kontekst*, Masteroppgave i sosiologi, Universitetet i Oslo, 2010

and wives, however, their position as mothers and experiences of motherhood are yet to be explored in-depth. Studies that I have come across which explore the lives of Russian mothers in the Norwegian context have focused on the role of Russian language in childrearing and the perspective of Russian mothers on Norwegian care/educational institutions. Vaynman has researched the way in which bilingualism plays out in Russian-Norwegian families.¹⁸² She focused on the mothers' strategies, attitudes and motives behind their willingness to teach their children the Russian language, finding that these women had a good understanding and strong commitment to the teaching of their native language to their children as part of their mothering role. The main motives behind language learning were found to be family ties, the aspiration of well-roundedness and the importance of identity. Language learning was used as a means of passing on cultural knowledge to their children and instilling a sense of Russian identity.¹⁸³

Nilsen's research on kindergartens in the North of Norway from the perspective of Russian mothers reveals the core values of these women in relation to ideas about the appropriate care and instruction for young children.¹⁸⁴ The mothers in this study valued the fact that kindergarten staff were democratic, caring and attentive towards the young children and were mostly positive to the way in which children were allowed to make decisions and were treated as equal individuals. Some uncertainty, however, was expressed in relation to the amount of freedom given to children. The informants found there to be insufficient academic focus and systematic learning in the kindergartens and found a lacking in the amount of overall structure in their activities. Overall, this study showed the meeting of Russian and Norwegian ideas of the relationship between adults and young children and the nature of child upbringing. The fact that these mothers preferred a combination of the Russian and Norwegian system suggests that they could see the advantages and disadvantages of both systems.

Inspired by and as a continuation of such studies, in this research project I will take the case of Russian mothers in Norway and explore the ways in which these women construct their motherhood in light of their own cultural backgrounds and ideas of what it is to be a good mother and the influence of bringing up children in a foreign context, namely one in which there is a dominant institutional and societal ideology of gender equality. I will draw on the idea of 'hybrid' motherhood where aspects of different parenting styles and values can be combined in the construction of immigrant motherhood.

¹⁸² Vaynman, M. J., 'Raising bilingual children. Russian mothers' experience in motivating Russian language and bilingualism in the Russian-Norwegian children', Master's thesis, Institute of educational research: University of Oslo, 2013

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 93

¹⁸⁴ Nilsen, H. K., 'Den norske barnehagen i Finnmark - sett med russiske mødres øyner', *Første Steg*, Nr. 2, 2011, pp. 26-28

Chapter 5: Methodology

In this chapter I will be linking the subject of this study with the choice of methodology and methods that was made in order to approach this topic in a beneficial and insightful way. I will combine this with an account of the fieldwork that was carried out and reflect upon ethical issues, challenges and limitations, and my own positionality as a researcher in relation to my interviewees.

Research setting

My fieldwork took place in the city of Bergen, on the west coast of Norway. As well as my place of residence and study, it is the second most populous city in the country. It is a relatively multi-cultural city both historically, due to its status as an important sea-port and communication point in Northern Europe, and also currently due to it being a popular place of settlement for those migrating to Norway.¹⁸⁵ Of the 271,949 people recorded to be living in Bergen on 1st January 2014, there was an immigrant population of 42,163 people, making up 15.5 percent of the population.¹⁸⁶

Methodology

In relation to the lives of Russian mothers in Bergen, in this study I aimed to explore the way in which their motherhood was constructed in the Norwegian context; how they chose to talk about certain aspects of their mothering role, what ideas and ideals of childrearing were held by them and how they conceived of their mothering practice. Silverman advises future researchers to base one's model and methodology, as well as particular methods, on the topic of research and the type of information that one is trying to find out.¹⁸⁷ In choosing an appropriate methodology for my particular project, I was informed by Yin's explanation of the five features of qualitative research, which included 'studying the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions' as well as 'representing the views of and perspectives of the people [...] in a study.'¹⁸⁸ Since my initial interest was to gain insight into the way in which Russian women themselves conceived of their roles as mothers and what they identified as being important aspects of bringing up their children, a qualitative research methodology was

¹⁸⁵ 'Facts about Bergen: History', Bergen Municipality website, www.bergen.kommune.no/omkommunen/fakta-om-bergen/5987 (accessed 30/05/15)

¹⁸⁶ Facts about Bergen: Immigrant population, Bergen Municipality website, www.bergen.kommune.no/omkommunen/fakta-om-bergen/befolkning?artSectionId=6125&articleId=63576 (accessed 30/05/15)

¹⁸⁷ Silverman 9/10, 2010

¹⁸⁸ Yin, R. K., *Qualitative research from start to finish*, New York: Guilford Press, 2010, p. 8

judged as being appropriate. It would allow me to explore in-depth the experiences and ideas of a small number of informants in a particular social and cultural context. In addition to my overall methodology, specific methods of data collection and analysis were chosen which would allow me to explore my research topic in a fruitful way and allow for most potential in my analysis.

In-depth interview as method

According to Kvale and Brinkman, it is ‘through conversations [that] we get to know other people, learn about their experiences, feelings, attitudes, and the world they live in.’¹⁸⁹ They also assert that the qualitative research interview is a professional conversation that ‘attempts to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences’.¹⁹⁰ Inspired by the potential of this research technique for my own study, I decided to use an in-depth interview as my method of data collection. This would allow me access to how women themselves described their experiences and ideas, both what they chose to say and how they chose to say it. I had initially decided to carry out semi-structured interviews and devised a list of many questions based around particular themes/topics to be explored. However, it became clear during fieldwork that this was an overly controlled approach to this method that I found on practical terms quite challenging, and that it was in fact much more natural for me to use my overall topics as a general outline to help me guide the interview. I used a similar approach to that described by Burgess, a prior agenda which consisted of a number of themes that acted more like an ‘Aide Mémoire’ to ensure that similar topics were covered in all interviews.¹⁹¹ Thus I would refer to my personal style of interviewing as in-depth and, with regards to the level of structure, towards the more unstructured end of the continuum.

I also chose to use interviewing as my main method due to practical reasons of what kind of information would be available to me both in the circumstances and time-frame of my field-work. I had also considered using participant observation as a means of studying the every-day life of these women in their roles as mothers. However, after careful consideration I decided that the kind of information that I was interested in collecting would be sufficiently accessible through the method of in-depth interviews, namely the experiences and conceptions of these women as they choose to explain them.

¹⁸⁹ Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S., *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*, Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage, 2009, p. xvii

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27

¹⁹¹ Burgess, R. G., *In the field: An introduction to field research*, London: Routledge, 1984, p.89

Stages of fieldwork

My fieldwork took place from June to September in 2014. My initial criteria for selecting potential informants were that participants should be women with a Russian cultural background who had been living in Norway for five years or more, and with at least one child born in Norway of school-going age. I chose these criteria as I saw it to be important that my informants were adult women who had spent their early life in Russian but who were also well-acquainted with Norwegian society and the institutional context, and preferably Norwegian language. However, when attempting to make contact with potential informants I found that I was not finding enough women with children of school-going age and since several women that showed interest in my project had children of kindergarten age, I decided to include those mothers who had at least one child of four or more years old. Thus my informants would have at least four years' experience of being mothers in Norway.

I made contact with my informants through work colleagues who put me in contact with Russian friends, the InterNations forum (an online worldwide expatriate community) where I received replies to my introductory e-mail, the Facebook group for 'Russian speakers in Bergen', where I posted a message about my project and was contacted via e-mail, and the snowballing technique of being introduced to contacts by previous informants. In my initial contact with potential informants I had provided introductory information about myself and my proposed research project. Those that expressed an interest in taking part were then contacted a second time when I took the first step in arranging an interview. I suggested meeting for a cup of tea or coffee to all potential research participants as a way of encouraging a more informal and relaxed environment for the interview and gave informants the choice of where and when to meet. Most interviews took place in cafes, both in the centre of Bergen town and at a shopping centre on the outskirts. Other interviews took place on a bench in town, in the canteens of a place of work and a sports hall, in the lobby of a dance studio and one interview took place via skype whilst the informant was on her lunch break. All of the places and times were chosen out of convenience for the interviewees and were relaxed environments, generally without too many people or too much background noise. They were also generally neutral, public spaces. I conducted 12 interviews in all, nine main interviews and three follow-up interviews. When I felt that certain themes had not been covered extensively enough in the initial interview, I contacted informants to see if they were willing to be interviewed for a second time. Interviews lasted from between 45 minutes to 1.5 hours for main interviews and approximately 30 minutes for follow-up interviews. The conversation was digitally recorded

with the audio recording application on my mobile telephone.

Ethical considerations

Since it is ethically important that when dealing with potentially sensitive topics informed consent is sought and steps are taken to ensure confidentiality,¹⁹² during my fieldwork I strived to make sure that interviewees were fully aware of the topic and objectives of my research, of their rights as interviewees, of the way in which collected data would be handled and used, and of my identity and the institutional setting of which I am a part. I explained this information before each interview and interviewees were also given a form of consent that contained this information which they were asked to read and sign at their leisure. Informed consent was treated as an ongoing ‘negotiated process’ rather than a ‘once-and-for-all event’ as discussed by Murray,¹⁹³ in that before each interview the participants were made aware that they might withdraw at any point and consent was sought before every interview that was conducted, also before follow-up interviews. I also asked permission on each occasion to record the interview as an audio file on my mobile telephone, making it clear that this was optional and that I could instead take notes if they preferred.

During project planning I sought and received permission from the NSB (Norwegian Social Science Data Services) to conduct my research according to their regulations of data security. Interviewees were kept anonymous in my note taking and have remained so during the write-up of my project. During my fieldwork I stored all written data in a private locked room or flat and transferred audio data from my mobile telephone onto my personal computer after interviews, which was then transcribed onto my computer at a later date. Both digital devices were secured with a password and on my person if not locked at my place of residence. All interview transcripts and digital audio files will have been deleted after the completion of this project and thus confidentiality and data protection was maintained to the best of my ability at every stage of this research.

Challenges and limitations

During my fieldwork the main challenges that I faced once I had made contact with potential informants were time and schedule restraints. Carrying out research during the summer months made arranging a meeting much more convenient for some participants but more challenging for others, seeing as they had holidays planned and other commitments. There were also some

¹⁹² Davies, C. A., *Reflective ethnography: a guide to researching selves and others*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 54

¹⁹³ Murray, W., ‘Paradoxes of ‘Consent’ to the Practice of Fieldwork’, in *Social Problems*, 1980, Vol. 27, No. 3, p.275

time constrains that put a limit on the length of two of my interviews. Overall, these details could have limited the quality of the interview data in making the interviewee less able to talk at length.

It is also important to discuss the language used for interviews. In the initial information that I gave to potential participants I made clear that I am fluent in both English and Norwegian language and that I can speak a basic level of Russian. My written correspondence was in both English and Norwegian but I made it clear that they should chose the language that they felt most comfortable with for the interview and that if necessary we could switch between languages and use some Russian if it helped them to communicate what they wanted to say. Most of my informants had mastered a good level of Norwegian, which they chose to use, but three out of my nine interviewees used English, either because they couldn't speak Norwegian or because they were simply more fluent in English. With regards to the challenges and limitations that the chosen use of language could have created, I feel that for some it proved a slight challenge at times to remember the exact vocabulary that they needed, but having the option to swap between languages meant that they could still express themselves well. It is important to bear in mind the limitations on self-expression that occur when not speaking in one's mother tongue but I feel that these women were sufficiently fluent in their second languages to put their meaning across. I would also say that language challenges and the effort I made to help them find specific words on occasions added to the sense that we were both working together and contributing to the construction and communication of meaning in the interview situation. This in turn improved our inter-personal communication.

In my transcription and translation of interviews I aimed to keep my translations as close as possible to the original dialogue and let the voices of my interviewees come through. In amending small grammar mistakes in citations from English interviews I aimed to maintain the integrity of what was said and the way in which it was said.

Reflexivity

The situation of the qualitative research interview has been described as 'a specific professional conversation with clear power asymmetry between the researcher and the subject.'¹⁹⁴ This complex relationship between the interviewer and interviewee has in past years been taken up by many scholars with the view to making researchers aware of their specific positionality in relation to the people that they are studying, not only with regards to their gender, age, ethnicity,

¹⁹⁴ Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S., op. cit., p. 33

religion, marriage status etc. but also with regards to the power imbalance in the relationship between researcher and research participants. In considering my role as researcher I have avoided seeing my participants as ‘subjects’,¹⁹⁵ but instead as participators in and contributors to my study and I have promoted reflexivity at all stages of my project planning and fieldwork.

In active reflection on my role as interviewer, I have taken several steps in the planning and conducting of my interviews in order to make the relationship between myself and my interviewees as open and symmetrical as possible. During the stage of making contact with potential informants I gave information not only about my project but also about myself, my nationality and interests, in order to initiate conversation with people who might want to reply. I encouraged my informants to make decisions as to the time and place for the interview and the interview style itself was open and conversational, allowing for both sides to contribute information but also for the interviewee to talk freely and at length, steering the conversation only slightly in order to ensure certain topics were covered. I took time to share my experiences and personal interest in Russian language and culture, having studied Russian at university and lived in Russian for a year, and thus it was often two-way rather than simply one-way communication.

In relation to my positionality, I feel that my gender, age, nationality, level of experience and social class are important to consider. As well as my being a woman, I feel that my part ‘outsider’ status, having grown-up in England, helped to create a sense of familiarity and common ground between myself and my study participants. I was able to navigate the status of having both English and Norwegian nationality and cultural background, and share my own stories of being brought up in England by a Norwegian mother. The fact that I am myself younger, unmarried and not a mother could have had the potential to create distance between myself and my study participants, since I have not gone through these life experiences. However, I feel that my being a younger and ‘unknowing’ listener to whom these women could not only describe but explain their situation, acted to counteract some of the power imbalance of the interview situation.

The fact that all of my research participants were university educated women arguably had an effect on the way in which these women communicated with me, their engagement with the topic and thus the quality of the data that I collected. In explaining that I was carrying out research for a master’s project, I was often met with understanding from participants, many of whom had gone through this process and were thus not only eager to help but also aware of the

¹⁹⁵ Lal, J., ‘Situating Locations: The Politics of Self, Identity, and “Other” in Living and Writing the Text’, in Wolf, D. L.. (ed.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, Westview Press: Boulder, 1996, Chapter 10, pp. 184-214

level of detail I was looking for in our discussion. I would say that the fact that our social and education backgrounds were to a large extent similar contributed to an ease of communication and understanding between myself as interviewer and my interviewees.

Thematic analysis as method of data analysis

Thematic analysis has been described by Braun and Clarke as a method for not only ‘identifying, analysing, and reporting (themes) within data’ but also for interpreting data.¹⁹⁶ They have highlighted the importance of being conscious of all pre-conceived assumptions or theoretical decisions, as well as the active role of the interviewer in both the interviewing process and the process of analysis. Using an interview guide based on three overarching themes linked to my research questions as well as leaving a degree of openness and flexibility in my interview, allowed new topics to be brought up in the interview situation. I have used the thematic method of data analysis in order, as suggested by Braun and Clarke, to allow for a balance between pre-conceived ideas and newly arising themes. This consisted of a system of manual coding where I went through my interview transcripts and identified recurring topics and then from these I identified emergent broader themes.

Introducing my research participants

In this study I will be analysing the accounts of my nine informants and the frameworks of meaning that they have drawn upon in order to communicate their understandings and experiences of motherhood. Since I have a relatively small number of interviewees I will follow the account of each throughout the thesis and, whilst certain informants will receive more focus in relation to specific dimensions of motherhood, I will attempt to give a holistic picture of the lives of each of these women. My informants will now be introduced in turn and since examples of their individual experiences will feature throughout my empirical chapters I have anonymised their names and other identifying factors. It is important to note that all of my informants came from urban areas in Russia, all have higher education and they were aged between 30-45 years old, with the majority being between 35 and 40.

Interviewee 1: NINA has lived in Norway for 16 years. She has two children: a 12 year old son and 19 year old daughter. Her daughter was born in Russia and was four years old when they moved to Norway. Three previous marriages, the third with a Norwegian man who is

¹⁹⁶ Braun, V. and Clarke, V., ‘Using thematic analysis in psychology’, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 77-101

father to her son. She is now unmarried. She is musically educated, has largely worked part-time in this field in Norway and is currently a master's student.

Interviewee 2: TATIANA has lived in Norway for seven and a half years, two of these in Bergen. She has one son who is four years old and is married to a Welsh man. She had previously taken a Master's degree in Norway and works full-time in the field of industry.

Interviewee 3: ANNA has lived in Norway for seven years and has three sons: six months, two years and four years old. She is married to a Norwegian man (brought up in Norway with one German parent). She has a PhD and works full-time in the oil industry.

Interviewee 4: OXANA has lived in Norway for nine years and previously lived in America for nine years. She has two daughters that are nine years old. Previous marriage with a Norwegian man, brought up her children as a single-mother and now has a partner. She works full-time for the Norwegian state.

Interviewee 5: LENA has lived in Norway for nine years, previously 14 years in Germany and one year with family in America. She has two children: four year old son and six year old daughter and is married to a Russian man who has lived in Norway for 15 years. She has worked part-time in Norway.

Interviewee 6: SONYA has lived in Norway for nine years and has two children: a two year old son and four year old daughter. She is married to a Brazilian man who has lived in Norway for five years. She took a master's degree in Russia and has worked in Kazakhstan and off-shore in the North of Norway. She now works full-time in the oil industry in Bergen.

Interviewee 7: KATYA has lived in Norway for 15 years. She was previously married to a Norwegian man who is father to her first son, 14 years old, and is now married to a Russian man with whom she has two sons: two and four years old. Has a university degree from Bergen and now works full-time in the medical field.

Interviewee 8: NATASHA has lived in Norway for 16 years and has two daughters: seven and ten years old. She is married to a Norwegian man and took a university degree in Norway. She now works full-time in the engineering industry.

Interviewee 9: OLGA has lived in Norway for nine years. She has two children: four year old son and eight year old daughter. She has a Norwegian husband and has mainly worked full-time, with some part-time work, in the field of education.

Chapter 6: Motherhood in the Norwegian context

The distinction made during second wave feminism between ‘motherhood’ and ‘mothering’ places experiences and conceptions of motherhood as a dynamic between both individual and society, as well as mother and child. By exploring the experiences of the mothers in my study in relation to their contact with child-care/educational and health institutions as well as wider Norwegian society, I will argue that the parenting values and practices of these mothers have been both influenced and facilitated, as well as challenged and limited, within the Norwegian context. Since ideas and ideals of parenting are very much linked to the conceptions of children and childhood within a particular socio-cultural setting, with specific parenting styles being promoted by society in order to produce certain results, discussion of what being a ‘good mother’ meant for these women will be understood in relation to ideals of a ‘proper childhood’. Thus the way in which my research participants have related to the prevailing childrearing ideals found in Norwegian society will be explored in relation to the way in which their motherhood has been conceived and practiced in this context.

The motherhood of my informants must be placed within the specific context in which their mothering takes place but their background experiences and their own social and cultural conceptions and ideals must also be seen as a part of this dynamic. As women with a Russian background bringing up children in the Norwegian context, these mothers often used their own upbringing and experiences from life in Soviet Russia, as well as experiences or knowledge of contemporary Russia, as a point of reference in their discussion of motherhood in Norway. How these women understood the parenting styles and practices of “Russian mothers” and “Norwegian mothers” and where they chose to position themselves in relation to these different mothering approaches will be part of the discussion. Thus in this chapter I will show how my informants have constructed their motherhood through a combination of practices and values associated with childrearing in both cultural contexts, adopting in general an authoritative parenting style that incorporated what they understood as the advantages of a more democratic Norwegian style and a more authoritarian style that they associated with Russian mothering.

Child-care, educational institutions and extra-curricular activities

‘Development’ as an ideal: early development, academic development and cultural development

Of the nine informants in this study, all mothers had decided to enrol their children in Norwegian kindergartens. The majority started their children in kindergarten when they were

around one year old, whilst the children of Lena and Katya started kindergarten at around three years old. In describing their experiences with and views on the Norwegian kindergarten and school system these mothers often used a comparison between their knowledge of the “Russian system” and “Norwegian system” in order to put across their ideas and ideals of bringing up infants. Nina and Natasha used a comparison between the kindergarten systems of both countries through which their ideas about the early development of children became evident. They both spoke in favour of Russian kindergartens and Nina, who had personal experience of her daughter attending kindergarten in Russia until the age of four, championed the variety and quality of activities that children took part in and how well-organised the Russian kindergarten system was. Natasha remarked on the environment being a stimulating one for children where they learned drawing, literacy and mathematics from a young age. The system in Russia was described as being one that was focused around the early development of infants and where the last years of kindergarten aimed to prepare children for school. By contrast, Norwegian kindergartens were seen as lacking in terms of their weaker focus on structured infant learning. A very similar point of view was given by Russian mothers in Nilsen’s study of their attitudes to kindergartens in Finnmark.¹⁹⁷ These mothers had commented on the insufficient academic focus and lack of systematic learning and structured activities, which they compared to the focus on early stimulation of children in the Russian kindergarten system, as did a number of my research participants. Whilst the system in Norway is in fact moving towards a more academic focus, in the eyes of my informants this was not sufficient enough, especially in relation to Russian kindergartens.

A sense of dissatisfaction was felt with regards to the overall educational system in Norway. Nina and Oxana expressed most dissatisfaction with the educational system, seeing it as providing a low level and intensity of learning. As explained by Oxana

‘if you compare like books that children in Russia learn in first and second grade it’s like a huge gap between what they learn here. So inevitably you can’t not compare and feel that they fall behind and that they are definitely not developing to their...half of their potential. Let’s say under challenged all the time.’

This idea of being under-stimulated was also suggested by Nina when she called Norwegian schooling ‘*entertainment*’ in comparison with the intensity of learning in Russian schools. She gave the example of when her daughter spent a year at school in Russia at the age of nine years old and when on returning to Norway found that she was far ahead of the children in her year group. From these accounts it became clear that the academic development of children was

¹⁹⁷ Nielsen, H. K., op. cit.

held as an important ideal by these women, one which they did not recognize as being fulfilled in their children's Norwegian schools. Thus as a result of bringing up children in the "Norwegian system" these mothers were frustrated by a situation in which their children were not reaching their academic potential and, according to Oxana, they would sometimes feel 'helpless' in their inability to change things. However, she herself had taken recent action to try and gather parents of children in her daughter's school and influence change in the curriculum but was not optimistic about the outcome.

Another aspect of this comparison was that, according to Olga, *'in Russia [children] spend a lot of time at school, they get a lot of homework. Lots of homework from the first year. Homework, and homework, and homework. Here they have a lot of free-time.'* In this comment she emphasized the relatively small homework load, and thus the amount of potential free-time, that Norwegian children have. The topic of how free-time should be used by children was discussed by many of my informants with extra-curricular activities being a recurrent talking point. The situation for children in Russia that was familiar to my informants was described in a similar way by all; one in which children *'must have...are forced by their environment to have interests on the side. They must learn different languages, they must be sports active. It is almost obligatory to play a musical instrument [...]. It is very typical. And then they must ride, and then whatever else'* (Nina). Interviewees also made a strong link between the importance of these activities in Russia and their value in relation to child development, not only academically but also in a much broader sense. In relation to homework and extra-curricular activities, Nina stated that *'in Russia everyone puts effort into [all round] development.'* Oxana compared the values that she saw as being encouraged in Norway and Russia, explaining that

'the main difference is the lack of focus [in Norway] on development of children, like intellectual development, cultural development from an early age. [...] Here they are supposed to have as much freedom as possible and just not to overwhelm them with activities, or early development is not seen as a value per se, you know, it's not on the agenda or a priority and of course the whole education system starting from kindergarten to school is built around this notion of freedom of child and yeah there is no focus on development of potential. You have to develop a child's potential to its most, and things like that. While in Russia it is a very strong value. Course in Soviet times it was even stronger you know and part of my back ground is Jewish and there it's even strengthened even more.'

Here she indicated that an important aim in the educational and extra-curricular system in Russia was to develop children both intellectually and culturally, starting at infancy. This value of all-round child development was placed in opposition to that of freedom, which she saw as an organizing principle within the Norwegian educational system and a dominant ideal in the

“Norwegian” approach to childhood.

Within these accounts, a particular approach was taken not only to the idea of ‘childhood’ but to the way in which ‘children’ were perceived. A child was seen as a person with a certain amount of potential that could only be realised by means of an intensive and stimulating learning environment in school as well as extra-curricular activities that would help him or her to develop into a cultured and well-rounded individual. In line with this social construction of children, which can be understood as the ‘developmental approach’¹⁹⁸ is normative parenting behaviour where, with reference to parenting practices in Russia, *‘those that are normal, standard parents, they gather their children for all kinds of activities’* (Katya). This parenting approach can be seen in relation to that which Lareau identified in middle-class families in the United States¹⁹⁹ and Vincent and Ball found amongst middle-class parents in London.²⁰⁰ The strategy of ‘concerted cultivation’, which Lareau found to be the ‘cultural logic of child-rearing’ amongst professional middle-class parents, is to a certain extent comparable to the logic advanced by a number of my informants in their own efforts to ensure that their children were mentally stimulated and that their talents were cultivated to reach their full-potential. These children were seen as a project for development and the role of the parent according to this logic was to enroll their children in numerous organized activities and devote a large amount effort to the all-round development of their children.

According to the responsibility that parents felt towards the development of their children in Vincent and Ball’s study, the ‘making-up’ of a middle-class child in London was largely based on the effort of parents in the transmission of cultural capital to ensure child development and future advantage.²⁰¹ In line with these findings, the fact that the mothers in my study were brought up in educated, middle-class, urban environments speaks to the fact that a number of them saw the act of supporting and encouraging their children to take part in developmental extra-curricular activities as part of their mothering role. It highlights the class dimension of the parenting culture which they followed, as well as the gender dimension. Olga felt especially strongly that it was the responsibility of parents to encourage their children’s extra-curricular pursuits, to *‘work on this’* and help them to keep it up. It became apparent, however, that it was she herself in her role as mother, rather than her Norwegian husband, who was the main driving force behind the organization and promotion of these activities. She

¹⁹⁸ Thelen, T. and Haukanes, H., op. cit., p. 17

¹⁹⁹ Lareau, A., op. cit.

²⁰⁰ Vincent, C. and Ball, S. J., op cit.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 1074

explained that she put time and effort into involving her children in numerous activities: *'I do it. I do it. We are very occupied in the weekend with activities. We do it a lot, but maybe it is something from Russia. I feel that I have to give something extra.'* She thus saw her focus on extra-curricular activities as an ideal that was part of her Russian upbringing and her drive to encourage this activity for her children as part of her mothering role.

Nina, in talking about her son's lack of activity after school, described how after completing his homework and before allowing him to go out to meet friends, she would *'drag him'* to the piano to practice for an hour, a pursuit that she saw as important and which *'he isn't allowed to give up'*. This encouragement to learn musical instruments and to be able to play well was part of what she saw as the talents that she possessed and which should be passed on to her children. She explained that her idea of a 'good mother' was *'to give all you can, to teach all you can'* and this mothering ideal was linked to her childhood and the practice of her own mother. She explained how she was everything to her mother, and how her mother did everything possible for her, not only through the giving of time and attention but also the effort put into her childhood in the form of the passing on of musical knowledge. As part of her own mothering role, Nina was giving her children the same skills and knowledge that she herself had received and was encouraging the development of the musical talent of her children.

In the context of Norwegian society, however, some mothers highlighted what they saw as a lack of available extra-curricular activities and also pointed out that existing activities were not of a high enough standard, did not take place regularly enough or were not of sufficient duration. This was interpreted as an overall lack of seriousness. Olga described how, whilst some Norwegian children were involved in activities, others were less interested and were met with what she saw as a passive and almost relieved reaction from their parents, *'then we don't have to do it'*, an attitude that she found to be contrary to her ideals. In line with this, Nina gave the example that *'When people ask my daughter when she is visiting Moscow "What do you do?", she says "I do nothing. Like everyone in Norway, like everyone. We just enjoy ourselves and do nothing".'* She explained how frustrated she was at the way in which it was acceptable for children in Norway to *'do nothing'* in their free time, whilst the system that she understood was one where children *'must'* always be in activity that is productive or worthwhile. Also, according to Oxana, a major challenge in her interaction with Norwegian society was *'feeling that Norwegians don't understand why you put so much effort into children, developmental extracurricular activities'*. This feeling of not understanding or being misunderstood came across as a challenge experienced by these women in trying to bring up their children according to values that they held; values which they felt were not as prevalent or recognized in the

Norwegian context.

In reaction to what they experienced as limitations within the Norwegian system, these mothers had made a concerted effort to involve their children in activities in order to provide them with stimulation and foster their development. Oxana explained that she personally tried to get her daughters involved in a range of different activities and that this was something that other Russian mothers in Norway also put energy into:

'to illustrate how much effort Russians put into education here in Bergen, Russian community mothers themselves take a big initiative in creating these activities that are missing from the system [...] So we like really like put an effort and create...since it's missing, so it is created. That's how much, how important it is for our identity.'

Here a link was drawn between the practice of actively involving one's children in extra activities and the role this played in maintaining the identity of these women, not only as mothers but as Russian mothers. Thus for some of my informants this aspect of what they saw as an important part of their role as mothers had been made more salient by the particular context of their mothering, due to the lack of structures in place to support these practices. More effort had been required of them in Norway where activities of the right type and standard had needed to be created for Russian children, and mothers had used time and effort to ensure that their children took part in these. I would argue that aspects of what it meant to be a 'good mother' for these women had been accented and given focus due to specific differences and what they experienced as limitations within this particular cultural context.

'Having a childhood' and gradual development

Whilst the language of child development was used by most informants, the importance of emphasising early development in their child rearing practices was not shared by all. Some of my interviewees used details of their own knowledge of the Russian system in order to contrast it negatively against the approach taken in Norwegian child-care and educational institutions. Katya commented that *'Russian mothers are much more stressed about things like upbringing. So they are very preoccupied that children should learn to walk pretty much the night that they are born [laughs] and you should teach your children to read and write when they are three years old.'* Here she painted a picture of "Russian mothers" as being highly focused on early development and overly demanding of their children at an early age. With the use of humour she created distance between herself and the approach taken by these women, indicating that she did not share this preoccupation and in this respect did not include herself as part of this group. Anna also shared a similar stance in commenting that:

'In general as I see from my friends, and talking to my friends that are living in Russia and having kids now, it's kind of, you expect more from a child than you do in Norway. In Norway it's very relaxed. If your child managed to start walking by a year it's good, if not then it's alright too. As long as he is healthy and the nurse says that he is healthy. But in Russia they expect you to start walking between 10 and 12 months [...] they are very consistent in learning, a lot of people are consistent on teaching them to stop using diapers by one [year old] [...] they are more demanding. They want the child to learn the alphabet, to learn speaking early, to learn....and in Russia for example it is common when you have a party that the child should tell the short rhymes, you know this is children...or sing a child's song. That's so...you don't do that in Norway.'

Here she valued the more relaxed and less intensive approach to young children that she experienced in Norway, where the general health and well-being of the child was understood as being the primary focus. Her example of children in Russia being expected to show off their accomplishments to others further emphasizes the prevalence of the ideal that children in the Russian context are expected to be 'cultivated' and their talents developed, and furthermore, that they should be exhibited for others to see. This informant had not experienced this as being usual practice in Norway and had not encouraged this as a part of her approach to mothering. She also pointed to that fact that *'earlier [I] was reading blogs and forums of Russian parents and they are like "my child can do that and that and that, already".'* Here a link was made between the ideal of children's early development and the positive reflection that this had on the mothers' parenting skills, as well as carrying with it a level of competitiveness between mothers. Anna added that she had avoided taking her children to the Russian school whilst they were very young as she didn't want to *'get more strange ideas related to bringing up the kids'*, a comment that clearly showed a wish to distance herself from the ideas of these mothers.

Olga also discussed attitudes to early child development that she had experienced in Norway where if children took some time in learning to walk and gaining their first teeth the reaction from others was *'it will happen'* or *'the child is growing, it's fine'*. Her stories from Russia were that, in a similar situation, children were taken to the doctor for multiple tests, given medicine or special massages for their legs, which she saw as being overly excessive. From these accounts, it thus becomes clear that these informants were to a large extent rejecting the preoccupation with early development that they saw as being part parenting approaches in Russia and were indicating their preference for the more relaxed approach to infant development that they had been exposed to in the Norwegian context, one which had influenced their mothering style.

With regards to the academic and cultural development of children, whilst similar pictures of the "Norwegian system" and the "Russian system" were painted by all informants,

there were varied opinions as to the positive or negative effects that these may have on the lives of children. Tatiana, Natasha and Olga chose to stress the academic strength of the Russian system in comparison with Norwegian schools but qualified this stance in claiming that schools in Russia were often too harsh on children due to the large amounts of homework they were given and the pressure on them to achieve good grades. According to Natasha:

'You learn less [in Norway], but it is perhaps good for the children. They have more childhood, unrestricted. They can play outdoors. In Russia there is a lot of memorizing. You come home and you have to do homework for at least two hours, for younger classes. Not to mention older classes. Then it's five hours of homework if you want to get into university.'

Here the weaker academic focus was seen in relation to the value of 'having a childhood', which was understood as allowing children more time for leisure time outside school. Olga valued what she saw as the playful atmosphere for young children in Norwegian kindergartens: *'there is a lot of playing and such. Like a very easy and enjoyable start for the children'*; as did Tatiana, who judged her son's time in kindergarten as positive in light of the fact that he was enjoying himself there. She saw this as a product of the Norwegian system where

'it's more fun. Children are more relaxed. [...] their mental abilities are developed in a more relaxed way so that they don't stress. You know, when they start working or studying they do not stress, they enjoy life, instead of stressing and focusing to be the best, or to achieve the best grades.'

Here she saw the value of gradual and relaxed development as taking precedence over that of competition for academic excellence. Also, according to Katya:

'In upbringing here it is [important] that children should experience childhood. They shouldn't start with things too soon [...] It is normal that children are allowed to develop at their own pace. [Parents] don't become stressed that they should learn things. It is really quite positive that there is less stress.'

Thus it became clear that a more relaxed attitude to children's development in the Norwegian system was seen as allowing children not only to experience childhood but to develop 'naturally'. Less focus on the early and academic progress of children was considered beneficial not only in the lives of children but also in the lives of mothers, since there was less pressure put on them by society to take on an intensive mothering role, and thus a more relaxed environment for mother-child relations. These informants expressed a very positive stance towards the influence of this approach to early development in their own experience and chosen mothering style.

In relation to the previous discussion of the important role that developmental extra-curricular activities played in the childrearing approach of some of my informants, other mothers that chose to discuss this did not share this focus to the same extent. Not only was the

volume of after-school activities mentioned but also the motives behind encouraging this involvement and the nature of these activities in the Norwegian context. Katya had sons that were very sports-active but explained her motivation behind taking them to these activities in terms of her sons' enjoyment and what she saw as a need for them to use up their excess energy. Natasha had daughters that took part in many different activities and the way in which she talked about this suggested that she was to a certain extent more focused on her daughters' level of enjoyment and the great variety of different activities that they had chosen to take part in, rather than on their potential for serious development. In describing her two daughters, she explained that *'they are very funny and do lots of different things. A lot of active things, like handball, and music corps and choir.'* She did however take her daughters' involvement in activities arranged for Russian children more seriously than other activities and indicated a tendency to prioritize these.

In talking about sports activities in Norway, Olga felt that there was more focus on children enjoying taking part rather than on them training in order to excel. She described a positive and inclusive environment: *'Here everyone fits. "You can take part, you can take part. You are fine and good." They say only positive things here. [Children] don't hear anything negative.'* She was unsure whether what she saw as a lack of focus on competition was such a positive or negative thing, but she could see some potential benefits of a more relaxed attitude, namely the possibility for children to take part in the activities of their own choice. Olga saw the benefits of the more inclusive values that she identified in the attitude to children's activities in the Norwegian context as well as the values of excelling and 'mastering' activities that she associated with the Russian context. She combined an understanding of both in describing her motivation behind encouraging her children's participation in activities. Overall, it was the idea of enjoyment and having fun that was the recurring reason given for children taking part in extra-curricular activities in the Norwegian context and this value was supported by a number of my informants.

Health services and attitudes to child health

'They say a lot of strange things about Russian mothers, that we are very careful about health, that children have green snot and are completely normal, and we always have some extra handkerchiefs and...but we can't look at that, not on other children either. You want to go and wipe it up [...] But when [children] cough for example we start to smear them with different balms and before they have got a fever and before...we are worried about this and worried about that. Norwegian doctors they don't understand: "Why are you coming with a healthy child?" [...] So we explain "perhaps it is this...she is coughing so much and it is getting worse and worse." But [the doctor] says "No, this

is usual, it is normal that children get colds”, looks at me like I’m an idiot, but we are just used to going to the doctor.’ (Natasha)

‘And so it is a very like...very stressed attitude to health. If the child has a slight cold they have to start at once with antibiotics and treatment, so it is like that. So many Russian mothers here they experience...they feel that the doctors are so poor because they don’t receive treatment when their children are ill with a normal cold [...]. Whilst here it is a bit more relaxed approach to life, right, they have a different attitude to illness. They think more positively in relation to things.’ (Katya)

In discussing child health stations and general health services in Norway from the perspective of being a mother, my interviewees had had very mixed experiences and shared differing opinions of the services they had received. The two quotations above show two contrasting views on the concern of “Russian mothers” about the health of their children. Natasha included herself as one of the “Russian mothers”, the concerns of whom were seen as not being taken seriously within Norwegian society. In further explanation she gave the example of a particularly negative experience she had whilst giving birth to her first child in hospital. She felt that many mistakes were made due to a lack of sufficient monitoring and to potential dangers not being taken seriously enough by medical staff. This more laid-back attitude that she had experienced was compared to medicine in Russia where *‘it is very different [...] there you get medicines and it is perhaps not so good for the child but for the mother it is a more considerate society.’* It thus became clear that Natasha was used to a system where medicine in general was more pre-emptive and preventative and that attention from medical staff was more mother-centred, serving as emotional support and paying attention to their concerns.

Health was described as an important and shared concern amongst these mothers and according to Nina children’s health problems was the topic that was most discussed amongst the mothers in her social circle. Natasha, Oxana and Nina talked about the fact that they were used to a system where doctors would make house-calls to attend to sick children and experienced this as a big difference in the Norwegian system. Natasha explained that *‘in Russia the doctor comes home to you when you have a fever. So the system is a bit different and the apparatus works very differently. Medicine is better there than here. So you experience it negatively when your child is sick and [doctors] don’t want to see her with vomit and the like, [they say] “stay at home”.’* Some of my informants thus felt that Norwegian medical professionals and Norwegian society in general had a rather laid-back approach to health and potential health issues. Oxana felt that doctors in Norway had a *‘let’s wait and see’* attitude, rather than a more action-orientated approach, and this was one of the biggest shocks and challenges as a mother in the Norwegian context. She had many family members in Russia that

worked in the medical profession and she described how she would contact them for advice when her children were sick rather than rely solely on her doctor in Norway. Thus for some of my informants the conflict between their own attitudes towards health concerns and the approach that they recognised as being more dominant in Norwegian society created difficulty for them in their mothering practice; they felt that they were not being taken seriously enough and this was arguably experienced as a barrier of cultural understanding. However, these mothers were able to navigate the system, utilising different sources of information and guidance, and ultimately followed their desired approach to child health within this context.

In contrast to this point of view, and as quoted above, Katya saw ‘Russian mothers’ in general as being overly cautious towards potential health problems, taking measures when they were not necessary. Being educated and working in the medical field in Bergen, she was well-acquainted with the Norwegian health system and approach to health-care and from the quotation above it was clear that she shared this more relaxed and positive outlook on potential health issues. Several of my informants described very positive experiences of pregnancy and having children in the Norwegian context. Anna explained how *‘it was very relaxing to give birth. I mean, I didn’t need more attention than I was given in the polyclinic and even with the first one I didn’t feel like it was so...but in Russia it’s so much stress to be pregnant and to give birth because they have too many controls’*. She compared the intensity of experiencing pregnancy in Russia with the more relaxed attention that she received and appreciated in Norway. She also continued this comparison in discussing the attitudes of mothers in Russia towards health concerns and mothering practice:

‘I think in Russia, in general, Russian mothers are more concerned about all kinds of stuff. They try to learn or to read about everything that can happen with the child. What you should do, what you shouldn’t, what kind of shoes to buy, what kind of shoes you shouldn’t buy, what kind of thing is healthy for the kid, it’s just...i think they put a bit too much into thinking about actually what’s right and what’s wrong. But it’s a lot, for example my mother asked me if I was washing the floor with chlorine and alcohol to disinfect [...] you don’t care about this in Norway. You can basically sit a child on the floor and not care about it too much. But you would never do this in Russia.’

Here she described a more intensive style of mothering in which health concerns played a significant part. She recognised that Russian mothers were conscious of ideas of what was ‘right’ for children, thus linking ‘good’ mothering practice with a strong concern for children’s health and well-being.

A preoccupation with child health and potential health issues was shared by Olga and Nina but they explained how they had been influenced by bringing up their children in the

Norwegian context. Olga compared her knowledge of her sister's pregnancy in Russia with that of her own in Norway:

'The first time I was pregnant it was a bit of a shock because my sister had had a baby nine months before me. We had children in the same year. And I knew how often she had been for check-ups [...] Two times I had an ultrasound here. You can have more but you have to pay for it. In Russia it is ultrasounds all the time. It's just check-up after check-up [...] In Russia, I think that it's very different but there is a lot of stress. Everything is just check-ups; 'everything is wrong', 'the child isn't reacting to the treatment'. They just find negative things. Here, everything is good; 'everything is fine, oh so fine!'

Here she painted a picture of two extremes where medicine in Russia focused on potential problems and where the attitude of doctors in Norway was that things were always fine. In relation to her own motherhood and attitudes towards her own children's health, she described how after the second child *'you become a bit like that yourself, 'Oh it's going so well! It will be fine!'*, echoing the more positive outlook that she had heard from Norwegian doctors. Thus in finding these two extremes to be an initial dilemma of *'what is best?'*, she had arguably found a middle-ground in her own mothering approach and attitude to health issues. Nina also described how, after living in Norway for several years, she had become more accustomed to this differing approach to medicine and also the limitations in the medicines that were available in Norway: *'it is like very typical that all Russian and Ukrainian mothers, they take medicine with them from home to here, since here you don't get prescriptions for many medicines that we are used to. But now I am used to Norwegian medicine. It took many years until I became relaxed in relation to that.'* Thus she had gradually learned to adapt and had also become more 'relaxed' herself.

Freedom and safety

Most of my informants commented that children in Norway enjoyed much more outdoor activity in kindergarten than children in Russia. This was deemed to be an extremely positive feature of the Norwegian system since children were given the opportunity to play out in nature, providing physical stimulation. According to Lena, who had previously lived with her family for a year in America, this was also a significant difference in relation to the American kindergarten system. Children there spent more time indoors and were not allowed to run around or make a lot of noise, so they would have high levels of energy when they came home. Whereas, in Norway her children were given the opportunity to go out for hour-long walks. The appreciation of outdoor activity and freedom for children also extended to life in wider Norwegian society and Oxana verbalised its advantages in pointing to *'the freedom here in*

terms of safety. Like, you know, not being afraid. [Children] can be on the street, take public transportation, at school, on their bike. So this physical freedom, you know, just movement and being close to nature, that's extremely important for me.'

The informants in this study all saw Norway as a safe environment to bring up children and this more relaxed atmosphere had influenced their mothering styles in that they felt that they were able to allow their children more freedom and autonomy. This discussion of safety was thus very much linked to children's independence and parents' relaxedness. This came across very strongly in the comparisons between the situation for children in Russia and children in Norway. Nina explained that:

'Here, there is a much more relaxed environment and far fewer people. You can let your children go out without stressing. In Moscow I had to look after my children, I couldn't just let them do out. When I did that, after I got used to it here, going home to Russia and visiting my neighbour, and seeing from the window from the twelfth floor that my daughter was playing down there...my neighbour said "Are you crazy? Is she on her own there, and you are sitting here? Go down and get her!" They have to be watched there. There are lots and lots of different people. You can't be sure that you child is playing and coming home. You have to be there.'

Here she drew a link between the dangerous environment in Russia and the demands that that put on parents. In Norway, however, she felt that she didn't have to stress so much about her children being in danger and could thus let them play outside without continuous supervision. Sonya also felt that bringing up her children in Norway had had a considerable impact on her experience of motherhood and that she had come to greatly appreciate the relaxed and even slightly 'boring' lifestyle in Norway when she became a mother. She expected her mothering experience to have been completely different and less happy if it had taken place in Russian, or even in Brazil where her husband had grown up, where she recognised more danger for children.

This more relaxed style of parenting was something that was recognised by my interviewees in the approach of Norwegian parents. Olga had commented that children were brought up to be more independent and given more responsibility earlier:

'Here children start to be home alone early on [...] My daughter is eight years old and almost everyone in her class goes home alone. They are home alone from two to five o'clock when they are eight years old. In Russia there are not so many that do that. They can't be alone [...] Here they take the bus home from school alone. Here they become more mature for that a bit earlier.'

She recognised this independence in terms of children becoming more mature and self-sufficient earlier on in Norwegian society and saw the gradual influence of this on her own mothering practice, since she allowed her daughter to take the bus home on her own and had

just started to allow her to be at home alone one day a week after school.

On the other hand, whilst the safety and freedom of children in Norway was championed by these mothers, it was also suggested that that this attitude to safety might be overly relaxed at times. Nina gave an example from her son's time in kindergarten when

'the children were climbing on a tree that stood right above a steep mountain and I said "Oh no, oh now, what are you doing there? Come down!" And the assistant said "Why are you stressing? Children can't fall." I said "How can children not fall?" "No, animals and children can't fall. They are built that way, they don't fall" [...] In Russia children can fall, but not in Norway. That was peculiar.'

Here she used humour to express her surprise at the reaction of this kindergarten assistant who seemed to exaggerate the resilience of children. She had also experienced this similar relaxed attitude on one occasion when her daughter had gone missing in town and the policeman that she had contacted had assured her that *'as long as it is light, nothing will happen'*. This behaviour was seen as not taking the situation seriously enough and this overall attitude to potential danger was seen as being overly relaxed. However, in general there was a strong sense that the mothers in this study recognised the influence that bringing up their children in what they understood as a safe environment had had on their mothering practice. They had adapted to the more relaxed attitude that they were met with in the Norwegian context and had seen this as a positive development.

Strictness, structure and boundaries

This 'relaxed' attitude towards freedom and safety in Norway was also seen by my informants as extending to the degree of structure and setting of boundaries in the lives of children. Discussion of the flexibility in the day-to-day organization of Norwegian kindergartens and schools brought to the fore the relationship between the institutional setting and the position of individual children, as well as the relationship between teachers and pupils. Whilst a couple of my informants felt that the lack of structured activity in Norwegian kindergartens meant that there was less progress for children, several others were positive towards a more flexible approach. Sonya commented that *if it's a nice day kids spend so much time outside playing and doing things. In Russia, no, like it's very much as per schedule.'* This was seen in relation to the experience of visiting her sister's family in Russia and not being allowed by the kindergarten to visit her niece for the day and join in with activities. She also discussed this contrast between flexibility and structure with regards to meeting the needs of her children:

'Here you know like when they started kindergarten [the staff] had a meeting with me and said "How's your child sleeping? [...] How do you want the routine to be like

sleeping wise?" [...] In Russia, no, it's like an army. Ok everybody 'til 7 years old will sleep, even if you don't sleep you're all in a bed, it's not possible to keep your child in a stroller, no. Everybody in the bed, like two hours sleep at a time. Like really, it's very strange. You have kind of, you know, a very strict, I don't know, like regime, routine.'

Here she made a clear distinction between the Norwegian system which was seen as accommodating the specific requirements of individual children and the Russian system where she understood structure as being firmly set, with the same practice used for all. Katya and Lena had also commented that the specific needs of their children were identified and followed up by the personnel at their kindergartens and schools, especially in relation to sleeping requirements and strengths and weaknesses of language ability. Thus flexibility was shown in the ability of these institutions to adjust to different childrearing practices.

The relationship between children and their kindergarten and school teachers in Norway was also discussed by several of my informants. Sonya and Tatiana talked about the strictness of schools in Russia, which was seen in contrast to what they felt their children were experiencing in Norway. Sonya described her childhood fear of the strict teachers in her kindergarten, telling stories of how she would cry and be scared each night about the following day, which she compared with the friendly relationship that she witnessed between her children and their kindergarten teachers. Tatiana explained that the fact that the main teacher in her son's kindergarten group was Russian was having a definite impact. It highlighted her understanding of the cultural difference in disciplinary practices since this woman was noticeably very strict with the children in comparison with many of the Norwegian teachers.

Regarding discipline and the setting of boundaries in the parent-child relationship, the majority of mothers in my study described themselves as strict and chose to refer to the styles of both Russian and Norwegian mothers when describing their own mothering practice. Anna positioned herself in between the practice of parents in Russia and Norway: *'I feel in Norway it's a kind of more relaxed way to bring up the kids than in Russia [...] We are also relaxed but I think I put more boundaries [than] friends around and other families. I have more boundaries than others. [...] I think we are pretty strict'*. She identified with the relaxed approach of Norwegian parents but, in seeing her own boundary setting as stricter than others in this context, as well as her Norwegian husband, she pointed to the influence of a more 'Russian' approach to discipline. She also drew on the experience of her own childhood when explaining her mothering approach:

'I have a pretty strict mother. And uh....for example I don't want my kids to fear me. You understand what I mean? [...] Because the one thing is to set boundaries and the

other thing is when you are afraid of your parents. Not in a sense that they are mean or something but, in general, she is pretty strict. So it's maybe for good but I don't think I want...I'm not sure if I'm afraid of her but I don't want my kids to be afraid of me.'

Here she used the example of her mother's behaviour to show that strictness can be too extreme and can have a negative effect on children. She herself did not want to be overly strict with her children but also did not wholly adopt what she saw as the relaxed style of Norwegian parents. Oxana also compared her own approach to that of her mother's: *'Norwegian parents are much more tolerant. Sometimes it spills over to like spoiling in my opinion...or just allowing too much, you know. But definitely I appreciate this more relaxed way and that's where I'm trying to... and I think I'm much more relaxed than my mother for example.'* Here she placed her mother's level of strictness as an extreme at one end of the spectrum and the potential for overindulgence that she recognised in some Norwegian parenting practice at the other end. In comparison with other parents in the Norwegian context she explained that *'I think maybe I'm a bit on the strict side but I get a lot of complements about my children,'* thus she recognized the positive result of setting boundaries for her daughters but had also come to appreciate more flexible parenting practice that was the opposite of what she had experienced as a child. Arguably, both Anna and Oxana had tried to find a compromise between these two extremes in the level of strictness of their mothering practice.

Natasha talked about her own strictness in relation to her Russian upbringing and her children's reaction to this:

'They often say to me "You are strict". First they say "because you are Russian", the oldest, and then they say "No, it's because you were a teacher. You are strict." I say "Yes, it is probably both", but in Russia they are much stricter with children than here. In Norway there is a lot of freedom. So maybe it has something to do with that.'

Here it is both her previous experience from being a teacher and the greater disciplinary demands in Russia that is seen as having had an influence on her level of strictness. Significantly, this came out of a dialogue with her children who were voicing their opinions and, in effect, signaling how she should act as a mother according to Norwegian standards. This can be interpreted as a kind of dialogue between this mother and the parenting norms that her children had become aware of through their contact with Norwegian society. Through this dialogue the tension between expectations of discipline in Russian and in Norwegian approaches to childrearing becomes evident. As argued by Wilson, S. et. al., the parent-child relationship is shaped in different ways by cultural influences and can act as 'an interpersonal

arena for cultural change'²⁰² Thus, in the context of Natasha's relationship with her children, this can be understood as a site for the meeting and negotiation of different culturally informed childrearing practices.

From discussion of parenting practices in Russia, there emerged a similar picture of the strictness of "Russian mothers" amongst my informants. Lena explained that *'In Russia it is a bit different. Mothers are much more dominant, more temperamental. Here it's a bit more relaxed, more friendly.'* This comment referred to the strictness but also more controlling behaviour of mothers in Russia and, in line with this, Sonya described her experiences of Russian mothering practice where

'parents are taking maybe too much care of [their children], like don't give them too much freedom. They limit them in a way like "don't do that", "stop there". [...] sitting at the airport in Russia waiting for the plane to go somewhere, you can see like Russian mothers they don't let kids be by themselves like even for a minute. Most of them they're like "No, don't do that", "Sit here", "don't make yourself dirty". And I think I was brought up the same way, it kind of limited me too much in the things I was doing.'

In her own mothering, however, she sought a balance in the amount of boundary setting and freedom she would allow her children:

'You kind of should guide [children] but you should not [...] stop them from doing something unless it's really dangerous or something completely wrong [...] I think you should be strict but you should give clear guidelines, this is kind of your limits. This is what we accept and this is what is wrong [...] but you should explain, you should always explain. "You shouldn't do that because it's not good for you", "this is dangerous".'

Here Sonya made the distinction between the act of setting boundaries in order to ensure the safety of her children and the controlling behaviour of mothers that are limiting their children's freedom of choice and exploration. This observation is in line with Baumrind's distinction between responsiveness and demandingness in parenting styles, seen in relation to intrusive and directive parenting practices.²⁰³ Whilst responsiveness supports autonomy and encourages self-assertion, demandingness refers to behavioural regulation and monitoring, with intrusive and directive behaviour being the extent to which parents intervene and aim to instruct the actions of children. Thus when Sonya talked of the way in which she had observed mothers in Russia limiting their children's behaviour, this could be interpreted as highly directive and intrusive parenting practice where parents exert direct control over their children's actions, in line with an authoritarian-directive parenting style. The type of strictness that Sonya endorsed, however, was one that allowed for a degree of independence and encouraged the

²⁰² Wilson, S. et al., *Parent-Youth Relations: Cultural and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012, pp. 8-9

²⁰³ Baumrind, D., 2005, op. cit., p. 61-62

responsiveness of parents through communication and explanation. This was in line with a more democratic parenting style, with less intrusive and highly responsive parenting practice.

This idea of balance in demandingness and responsiveness was present in the comments of the majority of my informants where they to a large extent encouraged their children to play independently and make their own choices. Olga described how she encouraged her children to steer their own play time and that she tried not to disturb her children or stop them when they were acting in an appropriate way. Oxana also talked of her increasing effort to allow her children to choose the activities that they would like to take part in, rather than her simply choosing for them:

'You know I can say just let it go, or I don't force on them activities that they don't want. You know the extreme case of the Russian mother, especially Jewish-Russian mother, [who] would be like you have to learn violin and molecular biology [laughs] but that's like extreme, you know. But I let them chose what they want and I wouldn't be pushing them to do something that they really don't want.'

She compared the extreme case of the controlling and demanding tendencies of a Russian mother with the more responsive mothering practice that she had now adopted. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, Oxana strongly encouraged her children to take part in developmental extra-curricular activities, especially those organized for Russian children. In relation to this discussion she also gave the example of one of her children not wanting to take part in a particular sporting activity. She explained her chosen mothering practice of encouraging and working with her daughter if the reason for not wanting to do the activity was simply fear of trying, but that *'if it's just something that she doesn't enjoy I'm not going to push it, even if I believe it could lead to harmonious development of her body.'* This could be recognized as a shift in her mothering approach from allowing or strongly encouraging only what she herself wanted for her children to letting them voice their opinions and have some control over decisions. Thus it could be argued that a significant pattern in the mothering approaches adopted by my informants was the balance that they tried to achieve between more demanding and directive parenting practices, such as exercising a level of strictness and setting clear boundaries, and more democratic and responsive practices, such as allowing for some freedom of choice and exploration.

Relationship between adults and children: mutual respect

The importance of respect between adults and children was a further point of discussion for a number of my informants. This included the value of children respecting adults as well as adults respecting children. For Natasha it was very important that her children grew up respecting

both of their parents. She gave the following example of when this was an issue in her family:

'One time when my oldest was maybe seven years old she called her father a "dummy". Just because something or other irritated her and so "you are dumb". He didn't react but I...you should have seen me! I didn't know what I should do with her [...] It is surely my Russian upbringing because "you must respect adults". That's it. Whatever they do, they are not dumb, if they think that it is the best thing for that situation. We are acting with our experience and you must simply respect us. And in Norway it is a bit like...at that age you can say "dummy" without it being significant. Next time you may call me "this or that". So I must have boundaries. [...] I think that it was very relevant to take it up there are then, at once, so that she will remember it for the rest of her life.'

Here she recognized the importance of children's respect for adults as a strong value in Russia; one which she saw as being part of her upbringing and which was now one of her mothering values. Significantly, her Norwegian husband did not see their daughter's remark as being an issue worth taking up, but she herself felt the need to make her children understand early on that this lack of respect would not be tolerated. The justification behind this value was the respect owed by children towards the decisions of adults which are based on their experience and judgement. Oxana, however, in describing the behaviour that she expected from her daughters, expressed the need for balance in their respect for adults as authority figures. Her desire was *'that they will be honest. It basically means not being afraid, right? And independent, respectful. To respect me and, you know, adults, but at the same time not be submissive. You know so it's like this balance. But they do definitely have to have respect.'* Here she differentiated between being submissive and showing respect, which in the context of this comment can be seen as the balance between exercising independence whilst also being respectful. This approach is in line with Ispa's findings on the change in childrearing attitudes in Soviet Russia at the beginning of the 1990s, a point in time when my research participants would have been in their early 20s. She found that blind acceptance of authority was being challenged, especially by the educated, that there was more support for independent thought and action, and that this came across in more democratic childrearing values and practices.²⁰⁴

The importance of adults respecting children was also a value expressed by my informants and Olga answered the question of what makes a 'good' mother by explaining the relationship between respect and love:

'Respect. I think that respect - from both you who must respect children and them who must respect you - that's what love is. That's what is most important, as I see it. If you give love, you get it in return. If you respect choice, you get it back [...] I think that I have got this from here. In Russia it is rather different. In Russia children do what adults say. It is adults that decide.'

²⁰⁴ Ispa, J. M., op. cit.

Thus love between a mother and child was seen as being expressed through the giving and receiving of respect. This act of showing respect for children's choices was understood as a practice and a value that she had learned from experience in the Norwegian context, whilst parents in Russia were described as making decisions for their children and thus not showing respect by allowing them to choose for themselves. Lena also explained the following:

'I have learned from Norwegians about personality. It doesn't matter if you are two or twenty two, personality is very important for people and they try to bring up children as people who are adult [...] with confidence. Also, children are expected to be responsible and do things [...] In Russia children are still children. We make the decisions, we are adults. But here you ask their opinion, "What are you thinking?"- "Would you like this, or would you like that?" In Russia it is like "He is eating this".'

Her understanding of children as individuals with their own character and personhood had been influenced by the Norwegian context, seen in opposition to children in Russia who are '*still children.*' This had also had an impact on her mothering practice in that she communicated actively with her children and encouraged them to exercise choice and make decisions.

This respect shown by adults towards children in the Norwegian context was also recognized in the teacher-pupil relationship. Sonya showed how children were understood as individuals with personhood through the way in which they were treated by their teachers:

'The kids have a good bond with the teacher, they feel safe there, and you feel safe as a mother leaving them in kindergarten. Even in schools, from what I can see, it's not a big gap, they are kind of equal with the teacher and themselves. They're kind of more like individuals, more on the same level [...] Like in Russia you can see there is a big gap. You know your teacher is not kind of a friend, it's not somebody you can come and discuss things with together. You are on different planes.'

Here she drew a link between the friendly, communicative and more equal relationship between teachers and pupils in Norwegian schools and the impact that this had on her sense of security and well-being as a mother when leaving her children under the instruction of others. A similar reaction was expressed by Oxana in the description of her daughter's relationship with her karate teacher. She was made aware of the positive effects of the nature of this teacher-pupil relationship when her daughter '*verbalized that for her it was very important that she is treated with respect because that made her feel safe*'. She also explained that this idea of children being treated with respect, or children like her daughter being aware of having a need for respect, was absent in her own upbringing. This was recognized as being a Western value which her children were now benefitting from in their relationships with adults in Norwegian society. Relating this to the status of children in this context, Oxana explained how '*that's very Norwegian when children are treated with respect and their rights are you know, recognized and protected. And they are seen as individuals, not as an extension of their parents.*' Thus

children were understood by this informant as being granted importance as individuals with personhood both in their relationship with adults and by the state. Overall, the importance of mutual respect between adults and children was recognized by several of my informants, with these mothers being influenced both Russian and Norwegian values, and the social and cultural conception of children in the Norwegian context.

Discussion

Parenting styles: ‘Russian’ and ‘Norwegian’ childrearing

In this chapter I have discussed the ideas and ideals of parenting that were held by my informants; those that they recognised as being prevalent in Norwegian as opposed to Russian society, and how they reconciled these different social and cultural influences when bringing up their children in the Norwegian context. From the comparative aspect of the accounts given by these women, there is a sense that they were often placing themselves in relation to what they understood as ideals of the “Norwegian system” and the “Russian system”, choosing to support and reject aspects of each cultural and institutional setting in order to explain their particular approach as mothers. For some, there was clear value in Russian parenting ideals but they had also found that the more ‘relaxed’ style of Norwegian parenting had had a positive influence on their mothering practice. Others, however, identified more completely with the attitudes that they found in Norwegian society, distancing themselves somewhat from many of practices of mothers in Russia. There was in fact a spectrum of different stances when it came to specific aspects of childrearing, namely questions of schooling and child development, discipline and mother-child relations, as well as child health and safety.

The mothers in this study often used the parenting styles of “Russian mothers” and “Norwegian mothers” as points of reference in relation to which they situated their own mothering styles. Whilst my informants positioned themselves differently, these constellations of parenting values and practices were explained in a similar way by all. Through experience of and comparison with mothering in the Norwegian context, it was often that certain values or practices associated with a Russian cultural style of parenting were seen to be overly extreme and controlling. And in the same comparison, other practices associated with Norwegian mothering were seen as going too far in the other direction, being overly relaxed and indulgent. Thus, in relation to Baumrind’s aforementioned extended typology of parenting styles: Permissive, Democratic, Authoritative and Authoritarian-Directive, and degrees of parental responsiveness, demandingness and intrusiveness, whilst Russian parenting practices were understood as being overly intrusive and demanding, and not responsive enough, parenting

practices in the Norwegian context were seen as being overly responsive and not demanding enough. Thus these two extremes of parenting styles, as described by my informants, can be understood as corresponding to an Authoritarian-Directive and Permissive style, respectively.

The responsiveness of Norwegian parenting and the demandingness of Russian parenting was largely understood in relation to the cultural constructions of 'children', seen in relation to adults, in the Norwegian and Russian context. In describing their experiences and perceptions of childrearing in the Norwegian context, my informants frequently referred to the way in which children were recognised by the state and by child-care/educational institutions as individuals with rights and agency, deserving of autonomy and respect. This was particularly noticeable in their comparison with the more hierarchical relationship between adults and children in the Russian context, where it was understood that children were seen as being more dependent, not being given the status of agentive individuals, and where parents would make decisions for them. Much of what these mothers understood as parenting norms and values in Norway was thus linked to the social construction of children in this context and this 'good mothering' involved two-way communication with children, listening to their opinions, giving them the opportunity to make choices and allowing them a degree of freedom. This type of parenting practice is very much in line with parental responsiveness, a dimension in Baumrind's parenting typology where communication and the fostering of individuality and autonomy features to a large extent, and it was something that these women were positive towards and had incorporated in their own construction of mothering.

However, a significant point of divergence in the mothering approaches of my informants was the extent to which mothers then expected an element of reciprocity and recognition of the value and status of adults in the mother-child relationship. A number of mothers, whilst being extremely positive towards the responsive nature of Norwegian parenting, felt that not enough was demanded of children in their behaviour and attitude towards their parents. Thus a high level of responsiveness was seen as needing to be balanced by a sufficient level of demandingness, which arguably varied from a moderate to a high level in the mothering practice of my informants. A more balanced relationship between mother and child was reflected in the encouragement of mutual respect, two-way communication and the encouragement of choice combined with a level of parental guidance. This incorporated the responsiveness connected with the cultural understanding of the child in the Norwegian context and the demandingness connected with the recognition and status of parents in the Russian context.

In relation to the two extremes in “Norwegian” and “Russian” parenting pointed to by my informants, I would argue that in the process of constructing motherhood they had moved towards more of a middle-ground in their chosen mothering styles, which involved a compromise between the degree of demandingness and responsiveness exercised. Mothers that identified more strongly with the more ‘relaxed’ Norwegian parenting style could be understood as having adopted a democratic style of parenting, which involved a high level of responsiveness but more demandingness than identified in the practice of Norwegian mothers. Main examples of this were the encouragement of independent action and choice in their children, giving children space to develop at their own pace, yet setting clear boundaries when necessary. Others mothers, however, that identified more strongly with values that were associated with parenting in the Russian context, had adopted a more authoritative style that incorporated a high level of both responsiveness and demandingness. This included recognition of choice and a degree of autonomy for their children, yet exercising a level of strictness and emphasising the importance of respect. Comparable approaches were adopted by mothers in studies on immigrant motherhood in the Norwegian context. In their meeting with Norwegian childrearing values, the Somalian and Pakistani mothers in Savosnick’s study had incorporated their native values of loyalty, obedience and respect, which were understood as collectivist socializing values, as part of a more authoritative parenting style with some democratic childrearing practices.²⁰⁵ In Fjeld’s research on Latin-American immigrant mothers, her informants had created a ‘hybridization’ of motherhood based on aspects of both Latin American and Norwegian childrearing practices and norms, balancing ideas of the needs of both children and mothers.²⁰⁶ From these studies, the influence of bringing up children in the Norwegian context can largely be understood in terms of recognising the positive implications of a more democratic parenting style and incorporating these together with the more authoritarian values of respect and discipline; values which were also combined in the approach of mothers in my study, albeit to different extents.

In relation to the parenting approaches of Eastern European immigrant professionals in the US, Nesteruk and Marks have posited that these parents were able to judge critically the advantages and disadvantages of different parenting practices and values that were associated with childrearing in the American context and the context of their native countries.²⁰⁷ In line with the approach taken by my informants, they had gone through a process of negotiation and

²⁰⁵ Savosnick, S., *op cit.*, p. 78/79

²⁰⁶ Fjeld, Å. K. W., *op. cit.*

²⁰⁷ Nesteruk, O, and Marks, L. D., *op. cit.*

modification in order to find a compromise between the different cultural influences that were part of their past and present lives. The relative ease with which the immigrant professionals in their study were able to adapt to their new social and cultural context and to make the best of their situation brings to the fore the significance of the social class and employment status of my informants. I would argue that the position of my informants within Norwegian society, as well as in their family context, which can be interpreted as being relatively secure and independent, contributed to their ability to recognise and assess the potential benefits of certain aspects of Norwegian childrearing and incorporate these in their mothering practice. However, it is important to not over emphasise the ease with which parenting practices are adopted in the context of immigration. As highlighted in the above research, immigrant parenting must be understood as a process of adapting, negotiating and reconciling and thus, in relation to my informants, changes in attitudes towards specific issues, such as safety and autonomy, and a sense of uncertainty as to the effects of certain practices must also be pointed to. Thus in the constructing of motherhood both contextual and cultural influences are understood as playing a part and immigrant motherhood is understood as a process of deliberation and reconciliation.

‘Intensive mothering’ and ‘concerted cultivation’

I would argue that another significant differentiator of the two main tendencies found amongst my informants was the distinction between different types parental control. A key dimension of Baumrind’s typology of parenting styles is the parental demandingness, referring to the socializing of children in a particular way and expecting a certain type of behaviour from them.²⁰⁸ Through the accounts of my informants a differentiation was made between a more directive form of demandingness, associated with an authoritarian style, where parents directly control their children’s behaviour, and the type of demandingness that means active involvement in influencing children’s values and preferences and monitoring their progress and development. Thus it could be argued that a significant differentiator in how these mothers constructed their mothering practice was the degree and nature of involved or ‘intensive’ parenting.

The mothers in my study were all well-educated, brought up in middle-class environments, and the more involved style of mothering that some of my informants identified with was to a large extent in line with what other studies have understood as both gendered and classed ‘intensive’ parenting practice. As previously discussed, the role taken on by middle-

²⁰⁸ Baumrind, D., 2005, op. cit.

class mothers in these studies includes the developing of children to meet their potential and the ‘making-up’ children according to certain ‘cultural logics of childrearing’.²⁰⁹ This act of ‘concerted cultivation’ can be understood as a combination of both the effort put in by mothers and the type of activities that are encouraged, those that stimulate mentally and expand the knowledge of children.²¹⁰ The more intensive and demanding parenting approach of some of my informants was expressed in their focus on early and all-round development, including the importance of extra-curricular activities, the emphasis put on the role of mothers to encourage, support and push their children in their pursuits, and the amount of time and effort that they put into their children’s upbringing. It was also evident in their preoccupation with potential child health issues, preferring a more action-based and pre-emptive approach, which can be linked to the long-standing concern for infant health amongst mothers in Russia.²¹¹

This approach of more directed and concerted development in children can be compared to the approach of other informants that instead stressed the importance of children having fun in their activities. In relation to what Stefansen and Aarsted have called the ‘enriching intimacy’ between middle-class parents and their children in the Norwegian context, this can be seen as another form of cultivation where children’s own initiatives are followed up by parents and where it is more the engagement with an activity that is encouraged rather than the type of activity itself.²¹² It is ‘fun with a purpose’ that is given focus and children are understood as engaging in self-development with the close encouragement and resources of their parents.²¹³ This rings true with the way in which certain informants described their own childrearing, or the childrearing practices of Norwegian parents, as allowing children to choose for themselves and try out different things, as well as understanding the nature of involvement in activities in Norway as being more inclusive and focused on children’s own enjoyment and enthusiasm for taking part. Thus in light of the logic of childrearing communicated by informants that identified with what they understood as a more Norwegian approach to parenting, one based more on more independent development, it can be argued that ideas of ‘intensive mothering’ and ‘concerted cultivation’ can be understood in different ways according to cultural understandings of the nature of mothers’ involvement and the degree of both demandingness and responsiveness incorporated in mothering practice.

²⁰⁹ Vincent, C. and Ball, S. J., op cit and Lareau, A., op. cit.

²¹⁰ Lareau, A., op. cit.

²¹¹ Ispa, J. M., op. cit.

²¹² Stefansen and Aarseth, op. cit.

²¹³ Ibid.

Chapter 7: Gendered parenthood

In the previous chapter I discussed the way in which my informants related to the dominant parenting practices and values that they encountered in their interaction with Norwegian society, understood largely in relation to cultural influences. In this chapter I will be incorporating a more direct focus on gender relations into my discussion of the way in which my informants conceived of and practiced their mothering roles in relation to the fathering roles of their husbands and to culturally conceived roles of motherhood and fatherhood. It is important to explore the influence of socio-cultural context on the way in which motherhood is constructed, which will include looking at the ways in which societal structures have shaped mothering practice and how normative ideas of gendered parenting roles have been seen to influence both the expected and practiced role of fathers in Norway. This has played a significant role in forming the mothering practices of my informants.

The gender relations in both Russian and Norwegian society were used by my informants as points of reference to position their own practiced form of motherhood. Thus discussion of the cultural expectations of both motherhood and fatherhood in the Russian socio-cultural context must be included in relation to the way that these women have chosen to discuss their own mothering in the Norwegian context. Perceptions of fathering roles will be seen in relation to my informants' own roles as mothers and the way in which these two are interlinked. By providing a nuanced picture of the interplay between work, child-care and housework, I will explore the patterns of gendered parenthood that are being played out in family life through the division of labour between mother and father. I will argue that whilst housework is mainly the responsibility of the mothers and thus to a large degree gendered, negotiation has taken place regarding participation in and sharing of paid-work and child-care.

Gender relations and gendered parenthood in Russia

For the majority of my informants, in describing their experience of motherhood in the Norwegian context they would use the example of motherhood in Russia as a point of reference. The situation for mothers in Russia and the expectations that both husbands and society placed on mothers in this context was described by a number of my informants in a somewhat negative light. Natasha explained that:

'My God, in Russia you do everything, plus you drop-off your children, take them to kindergarten. The husband just works and earns money. Then he comes home, opens a bottle of beer and watches football. You can't even disturb him when you do the vacuum cleaning. You do the rest, he just works. Plus you work as well, but you earn less money.'

Most often women earn less money and they put up with all sorts of things, and the men rarely do housework. It is rare that they cook, they bake, rare that they are in the kitchen at all [...] you work a double shift plus housework.'

Here Russian women are seen as having the triple burden of work both outside and inside the house, as well as responsibility for the children. The husband on the other hand is seen as lacking in supportive behaviour and participation in housework. Russian women are portrayed as being in a position of financial dependence on their husbands and thus as having less power to negotiate their roles as mothers and housewives. Katya also discussed what she understood as the norm for Russian mothers:

'In Russia [...] when people have small children it is often that mothers are at home with small children when they don't have a place in kindergarten. [...] at the same time that Russian mothers are quite communist, Russian men expect that mothers will be at home with children, and also that they will perhaps work and earn a bit and do household tasks. [...] Russian women actually have a lot on their plate.'

She described a situation where the expectations that Russian men have of their wives is to be both a housewife and a worker and where it is culturally expected that women are the ones who stay at home with young children. Reference to Russian women as being 'communist' in their behaviour, in that they choose to combine work and having children, is seen in relation to the expectations of men which add to their burden. Thus, in both of the above comments, it is indicated that the lives of Russian mothers are very much affected by both structural constraints and societal expectations of what their role should be. This depiction of the gender role attitudes and the everyday gendered practice in contemporary Russia is to a large extent in line with research findings, as laid out in the contextual overview. Normative gender relations in Russia largely conform to the male-breadwinner model, which accounts for societal expectations of mothers being understood primarily as child-carers and housewives.²¹⁴ The high-level of female employment, however, has been seen as part of the 'official' gender contract that encourages dual-earning and also in relation to economic necessity and the desire of women to participate in paid labour.²¹⁵ Thus this relationship between gender role attitudes and the everyday practice of women in Russia reflects the picture painted by my informants, in that women are both active in the workplace and expected, to have the main responsibility for child-care and the household.

A negative portrayal of fathers in Russia was also present in the accounts of other informants. Sonya commented that *'Russian men are too spoilt and, I don't know, you would*

²¹⁴ Motiejunaite, A. and Kravchenko, Z., op. cit.,

²¹⁵ Ibid.

not feel safe for your child to be left for a few days with the father because they are kind of like babies themselves [...] they are more selfish in a way, I would say, and not so much prepared for their paternity, father duties.’ Here she painted a picture of Russian men as immature and irresponsible, and generally not fit to carry out what is required of them as fathers. She also explained that she had a theory of why Russian men behaved this way which was based on the fact that after the losses of the Second World War there were less men in Russian society, so new born sons were treasured and *‘maybe they spoiled the kids too much and didn’t really teach them about responsibilities, about being more independent.’* Thus she saw the over-indulgence of mothers being partly to blame for the childishness of Russian men and she recognised the effects of this in her own upbringing:

‘My father was also you know like too spoilt by my grandmother. He was not taking too much time of his trying to raise me and my sister or like when he had the possibility he would rather go on, I don’t know, a fishing trip with his friends than spend time as a family all of us together. That’s what I didn’t like.’

The understanding that this informant had of the gender relations in Russia was thus based on childhood experiences with her own mother and father as well as knowledge of the situation in contemporary Russia. She recognised the influence of upbringing and context on the behaviour of fathers in both the Soviet Union and Russia today.

‘Russian fathers’ as ‘traditional fathers’

In relation to this depiction of the situation in Russia, informants in this study made a clear distinction between the nature of motherhood and fatherhood in Russia as opposed to the gender relations between mother and father in the Norwegian context. The behaviour of Norwegian or ‘international’ fathers was often placed in contrast to the image painted by my informants of ‘Russian fathers’. Sonya made a clear distinction between what she saw as two categories of men, claiming that

‘it’s a really big difference with a Russian father and some like international father because you know like 90 percent of my friends, because we were studying geology, like oil industry and everything, most of them are now abroad [...] and I can see so much difference with my friends who are actually married with foreign men and with Russian men. It’s completely, completely different.’

She also assessed her situation in relation to her own and others’ experiences with Russian men:

‘And thinking back on my previous relationships with Russian guys when I was studying, I think how lucky I am that I have not ended up with any of them because it would be completely different scenario [...] I have several friends married with Russian guys and I can see how different it is.’

Thus the behaviour of 'Russian fathers' was placed in sharp contrast to that of fathers with other cultural backgrounds and portrayed in an unequivocally negative way (*'I think how lucky I am that I have not ended up with any of them'*).

Tatiana talked of different fathering roles less in relation to cultural differences and more in relation to historical change. She explained how

'fathers in Norway and my husband, though he is not Norwegian, they take more time with the child than in Russia. Probably still, I don't know, I don't go to Russia very often. [...] Now my husband does everything. If he had breasts he would breastfeed, but [laughs] you know, at that point he was regretting he couldn't help me more [...] So yeah things have changed in the way that husbands are taking more care of the children, which is actually very good.'

The willingness of her Welsh husband to care for their young child is seen as equivalent to that of fathers in contemporary Norway and to a more progressive form of fatherhood. This change in the behaviour of fathers is seen in contrast to that of the previous generation, where

'fathers did not take much, participate much, in the bringing up of children, especially small ones, before they go to school and actually start talking about things you can discuss with an adult. Like my husband's father, he never changed diapers, never made children's food, nothing like this. My father was the same, he was traditional.'

Thus she saw her own situation as more a product of the changes in society, rather than simply cultural influences on fatherhood. An apt distinction for this mother was the difference between a more traditional and a more modern fathering role.

Lena referred to both traditional gender roles as well as cultural influences when describing her own family situation: *'My husband is from Russia, raised in an old-fashioned way. Being in the kitchen and tidying is mostly my job.'* Here she linked her husband's Russian background with his 'old-fashioned' upbringing, which was seen to impact on her role as a housewife and his role as the family breadwinner. However, she also contrasted the behaviour of Russian men with that of her husband, who was brought up in a Jewish Russian family and had learned family values that set him apart from other Russian fathers with regards to child-care. Here there was a strong sense that the role played by her husband as father was influenced by the nature of his upbringing and the cultural expectations of this role with regards to housework on the one hand, and child-care on the other. This had in turn influenced the role that she took on as mother.

Cultural expectations and the 'Norwegian way'

Cultural expectations of the fathering role were an important aspect of the way in which some of my informants described their experiences of motherhood. Sonya had had little expectation

of fathers being able to look after young children, based on what she had experienced and learned of Russian fathers. She was thus pleasantly surprised by her own family situation:

'Luckily, my husband he is very good with kids. Very often I was leaving him just with one of the children. Like the first time I left him at home I was pregnant with my second child [...] and I told him "Ok, I'm just going to visit a friend of mine and you need to take care of our daughter for five days". And he managed it very well so I trust him alone with the children and in our daily activities, I mean, he is very helpful.'

It is evident from this comment that the ability of husband to be able to manage looking after their young daughter on his own was not seen as something self-evident and thus the fathering role of her Brazilian husband, in being capable and helpful in caring for their children, was seen as a fortunate one.

Natasha, who was married to a Norwegian man, talked of the pleasant surprise she experienced when witnessing the role taken by fathers in Norway:

'So it was strange when I looked at fathers and how they were with small children. They take on a good deal and do all nappy changes and feeding and not breastfeeding but they wash them. So that is quite special. I think that it is very positive to have the experience in Norway that you don't have to do everything. And, as I said, it wasn't normal for me in any case when I came [to Norway].'

Here her cultural expectations of the role of a mother was 'to have to do everything' and thus when seeing fathers in Norway being actively involved in caring for young children she found this mixing of gendered parenting roles to be unusual. What was considered women's work in Russia was carried out by men in Norway, and she found this sharing of tasks to have a positive impact on her own motherhood. She was also very reflective as to her overall experience of being a mother in Norway in comparison with the situation in Russia, commenting that

'[In Norway] it is much easier because [men] are used to helping in the house with housework so it is simply a luxury problem here, in my opinion. Some of my Russian friends, we start to discuss how many plates [their husbands] put in the dishwasher, [and they say] "I put in four, he only put in two!"'

Here she saw a significant difference being the fact that Norwegian men were more involved in housework than men in Russia, making the situation generally easier for wives and mothers. Whilst having become accustomed to the ease of receiving help from her own husband, she still viewed her situation in relation to what she saw as the relative hardship of mothers in Russia, which made any situation in Norway seem like 'luxury'. This comparative perspective had placed her experience of motherhood in Norway in a positive light, which she had not taken for granted, in contrast with other Russian women in Norway that she knew.

When discussing fatherhood, not only did the comparison between fathers in Russia and in Norway feature in the accounts of my research participants but gender relations in the

Norwegian context were also seen as being significant. Katya commented that *'Norwegian men, they are considered to be pretty good at taking care of things at home but my Russian husband is as well.'* Here she differentiated between Russian men living in Russia and those that were living in Norway, as in the case of her own husband, and it was very much implied that she saw the behaviour of her husband as being equivalent to that of a 'Norwegian father'. Also, in the picture of Norwegian fatherhood described by Katya, there emerged an understanding of gendered parenting ideology and practice in the Norwegian context:

'[In Norway] people share household tasks so that when [spouses] are both in full-time work then they try...it is very like Norwegian culture that it is shared in terms of tasks. It is very much equality, like a proper equality, where both are completely the same. And you see like paternity leave [...] in Russia it isn't so often that fathers go for walks with their children in pushchairs. You notice this a lot here in Norway.'

Here she understood the Norwegian system as being based on a 'proper' gender equality which translated as both mother and father being given and making use of the opportunity to look after their young children, in the example of state funded paternity leave, and also as the equal division of household tasks. In contrast with the housework load for Russian women, *'it isn't that only the mother will do it, they share it very evenly. And that is how it is with us.'* Thus she described the situation in her own family as being based on an equal division of labour, which was equated with her understanding of parenting roles in Norway as being gender equal.

Regarding the involvement of fathers and the use of paternity leave in Norway, Anna commented that *'in general, men are more helpful and expected to be involved in bringing up the kids.'* She also added: *'but that's the Norwegian way. They don't share parental leave in Russia. It's not that common.'* Thus she understood the involvement of fathers in child-care, especially in caring for young children, as being a product of a Norwegian parenting culture, where both the normative ideas and expectations of the fathering role and the actual practice of fathers contribute to this sharing of child-care responsibilities between mother and father.

Tatiana, however, pointed more to the societal organization of the Norwegian context that shapes the parenting practice of mothers and fathers, where

'it is so accepted...well everything in Norway is organized in a way that both have to participate. Kindergartens close very early, so either you work part-time or you have to split the days between your husband and yourself. So, like, many small things either do not allow you to work fully or you have to have good communication and split it with the husband, or have a house help.'

Here she commented on how the institutional setting is structured in a way that mother and father must co-operate and share child-care responsibilities in order for both to be able to work.

In relation to the comments above, the expected and practiced behaviour of fathers in Norway, and policies and discourse that provide parental choice and encourage shared responsibility for child-care, were seen as having contributed to the way in which these women practiced and experienced motherhood in the Norwegian context. According to research on gendered parenting in Norway, whilst the involvement of fathers in child-care has increased significantly over past decades, their participation in housework has increased only to a certain degree, with women still taking on more responsibility for household tasks.²¹⁶ There is increasing expectation that fathers will take shared responsibility in the family context, however, middle-class mothers with small children have been found to be in general less satisfied than working-class mothers in relation to the division of household tasks, since their expectations of gender equality have not been met.²¹⁷ Thus a gap can be identified between the ideology of gender equality that is promoted in Norway and the reality of and satisfaction with everyday practice in middle-class families.

However, in the accounts of my informants, the behaviour of fathers in Norway was seen very much in relation to the culturally expected behaviour of Russian fathers, and/or a more 'traditional' fathering role, and this had challenged expected and practiced mothering roles. It had opened up for the possibility that they didn't have to 'do everything', especially when it came to caring for babies and young children. In relation to the ideology of gender-equal parenting in the Norwegian context, only Katya engaged explicitly with discourse on gender equality and talked of the expectation that mothers and fathers should share their responsibilities 'equally', which was seen as being reflected in her own family situation. Many informants discussed the popular portrayal of Norwegian fathers being active in child-rearing and housework, which in their family contexts this was translated into the 'helpfulness' of their own husbands. However, this did not necessarily mean equal responsibility for both mother and father. I would argue that their cultural expectations of fathers in Russia had significantly influenced the positive way in which they viewed their experiences as mothers in Norway.

Division of labour: Work, child-care and house-work

As discussed above, the informants saw their experience of motherhood in Norway as being affected by the degree of involvement of fathers in both child-care and housework. A number of women talked about the fact that their own husbands were 'more involved' and shared the responsibility of household tasks but a further exploration of the interplay between the tasks

²¹⁶ Kitterød, R. H. and Rønsen, M., 2014, op. cit.

²¹⁷ Kitterød, R. H., op. cit.

undertaken by mother and father in the family context shows a more nuanced picture of the way in which parenting roles were constructed.

Of my nine informants, seven took their allotted maternity leave and then went back to full-time or part-time employment. Four of these mothers pointed to the fact that their husbands had made use of the paternity leave available to them for at least one of their children. The remaining two mothers cared for their children at home until the age of approximately three years old when they then made use of kindergartens. Of these two women, Katya went back to full-time work and Lena was a stay-at-home mother with occasional part-time work. Katya described her current family situation as one where both she and her husband were now working full-time and sharing in child-care and housework. As noted above, she saw their parental tasks as being divided evenly between the two of them and she gave the example of both mother and father sharing the responsibility for taking their children to school and to extra-curricular activities. Inside their home, she explained that:

'I make most food while he washes the clothes mostly. It just became like that because he doesn't like making food that much whilst I do like making food. But we have never had a list of things like "you should do this", it just became that way for us. We just take on tasks as we see that ok, here is something that needs doing.'

Here she described a division of tasks between mother and father that was seen as coming about rather organically due to preference or convenience. Both of the mentioned household tasks would traditionally be understood as 'women's tasks' but in this case were performed by both parents. There was a sense that the pattern described was a rather relaxed one where each parent had an understanding that the other would do their part in the upkeep of the household.

Lena described her family situation in a way that suggested that more traditional gender roles had been adopted by herself and her Russian husband. She indicated that her 'job' was to do the cooking and cleaning for the household and also have more responsibility for child-care, but she qualified this by adding '*as long as I'm not working. He knows this. Therefore he isn't very interested in me starting to work full-time.*' It could thus be interpreted that a certain amount of negotiation was taking place between husband and wife as to their roles as father and mother and the present and future division of paid and un-paid labour. She explained that she was in agreement with the current situation so far but that she had plans of going back to full-time work soon when the children were more independent, which would involve her husband taking on more responsibility for child-care. She also chose to highlight the fact that regarding the division of household tasks, she had the responsibility for looking after all 'bureaucracy' related to the family cars:

'My husband has lived for over 25 years in Norway. He hates this bureaucracy, I have to do that. [...] When I lived in Germany I took my car with me, therefore I know all about these customs, administrative things. Therefore he wanted to send me to Oslo so that I can help to fix that. Women in a man's world then, it's ok, we can manage that.'

It is suggested here that in taking on the responsibility for the family cars she was crossing over into a male domain of activity but that this was something she could easily cope with. So, having started off by describing her family situation as one in which she had taken on the role of housewife, a nuanced picture emerged of the arrangement as regards the gendered practices undertaken by mother and father, with negotiation taking place as to the division of labour both inside and outside the home.

In describing the sharing of work and child-care responsibilities, Anna explained that after the birth of their first child she and her husband had worked different shifts, with him taking one day off a week to be at home with the child whilst she was at work. She also explained that *'now I am more with the kids because he is fixing the house but from the first child I'm actually the one who travelled more alone without the kids and he was staying with them.'* Thus responsibility for looking after the children had been a give-and-take whilst their three children were growing up. Regarding the interplay between work, child-care and housework, however, Anna had explained: *'I started to think if I should take one day off a week but so far I work 100 percent. But it's more to take a day off to relax at home, to have a day-off for cleaning, so you don't have to spend Saturday and Sunday cleaning but more like being with the kids.'* Here it is indicated that she saw cleaning as being her task within the household and that her use of time during the weekends had been a balancing act between household upkeep and child-care. She prioritized spending time with her children but saw housework as getting in the way of this. This was further emphasized when she compared her own use of time with that of her husband:

'When he is with the kids he is 100 percent with them [...] you know women have more to do like cleaning the kitchen and all those practical boring things to make it look a bit nice and then you start in this vicious circle of picking up toys from the floor and cleaning. [...] he doesn't care about that so they get his full attention [...] sometimes I think I should just let it go and go and play with the kids instead of trying to clean.'

While she struggled to *'let go'* of her household tasks, her husband was seen choosing to spend time focused solely on the children, without having to balance his time between the children and housework. A sense of frustration at this situation was indicated by her contemplating just doing as her husband did and playing with the children, instead of juggling the various aspects of her role as wife and mother. The difference, however, is explained by the fact that *'he doesn't*

care about that', whilst she had to take on responsibility for the *'practical boring things'* around the house.

Tatiana, Natasha and Olga also described a similar division of child-care and housework between husband and wife, where responsibility for child-care was shared but where they themselves had responsibility for cooking, cleaning and other household tasks. Tatiana described her family situation in the following way:

'Yes we do have a certain split of tasks, for example, he always gives [the child] a bath instead of me. Probably he takes him more often on the weekends because I can be more occupied with my hobbies and he is probably cleverer to play with him. You know I am kind of cleaning and cooking, serving [laughs].'

Here it is indicated that this father had taken on specific child-care tasks and also that negotiation was taking place as to responsibility for looking after their child at different times during the week. Tatiana was able to make time for her own leisure activities during the weekends whilst her husband looked after their son. However, she saw housework as being more her task. In describing what motherhood meant to her, she explained that:

'It's responsibility because you have to care for the family and you always have to have your child in mind. It's like...because he can't make decisions, he can't organize things for himself so you have to organize everything. Very often husbands cannot organize things the way we prefer, so it's like a lot of organizing and taking care of things.'

As part of her mothering role, she had taken on the main responsibility of being family 'organizer'. She also described the splitting of tasks in the type of daily communication that took place between herself and her husband as to who would do what: who would drive their son to and from kindergarten and who would shop and make dinner. However, she saw herself as being the parent that had a broader overview of the goings on regarding their son. Also, the sense of responsibility that she had as a mother can be seen in contrast to the way that she described her husband's time spent with their son as consisting of playing games and role play. This difference in time spent by each parent with their children was also found in Anna's account of and her husband's focus on play-time above all else. In addition, it could also be interpreted from the accounts of Natasha and Olga that whilst they saw their husbands as sharing in child-care tasks, they as mothers had taken on more responsibility for overall organization in their children's lives, i.e. the choice and organization of their children's extra-curricular activities. Both informants had taken control of the situation and noticeably did not mention their husbands in discussion of these aspects of their children's lives. Thus, there was a difference in the roles adopted by mothers and fathers, as described by my informants, not only in relation to the amount of time that each parent spent with their children but also in

relation to the perceived significance of how this time was spent. Across the accounts of informants a degree of ambivalence was evident here.

Spending time as a family

Whilst some informants had discussed the mother-child relationship as different or separate to that of father and child, three of my informants chose to highlight the importance of spending free-time together as a family. Lena took great delight in describing her family time: *'We are outdoor people. We like to go for walks. We know almost all the mountains in the area here and we are starting to go with the whole family on foot [...] before I went with a baby carrier and my husband with a sports push-chair.'* For this mother it was both natural and important for both parents *'to be together with the children [...] to travel together with the whole family.'*

For Katya, spending free-time together as a family was something that she associated more specifically with Norwegian family life. In describing her love of *'kos'* or *'cosy-time'* spent with her children, she compared her own childhood and her knowledge of families in Russia with the way in which she wished to feel close to her children and use her free-time to be together with them. According to this interviewee, it was considered normal for parents in Russia to have holidays alone whilst their children were in holiday camps, something which she could never do. In Norway, however, she recognised values of togetherness and physical closeness with which she identified and in relation to which she described her own family life. This description of family-time and a close parent-child relationship can be understood in relation to Hennem's research on the cultural codes of love within Norwegian families, interpreted and communicated through a context of *'intimacy'*.²¹⁸ This implies that the parent-child relationship is based on a strong personal and emotional connection and, in line with the accounts of my informants, this intimate relationship is created through intense interaction with children starting from their infancy and built up over the years. Both Katya and Lena understood this family-time as typical of the Norwegian context. Through comparison with family relations in Russia, Katya identified her relationship with her sons as being in line with parent-child relations in Norway, namely as expressing a special closeness between parent and child.

²¹⁸ Hennem, N., 2004, op. cit., p. 155

Role of extended family

According to my informants, grandparents in Russia often play an active role in caring for and bringing up their grandchildren. Their help and presence allows for a different dynamic in many Russian families, seen in comparison with Norwegian families. Some mothers had regular visits from their parents and help from mothers/fathers-in-law, but for others there was a significant feeling of lacking a network of family support. According Olga,

'In Russia is it a set thing that grandparents help to collect children from kindergarten, collect children from school. Or children are at home with grandparents to have food and get changed and everything. Here there is...you have to arrange two weeks before [to ask] 'You can collect on this day? Could they be with you for two hours?' Here it is a bit different. You don't expect help. You have to arrange things yourself.'

Here she contrasted the expectation of help from grandparents in Russia with the situation in Norway where she understood help as being something that was not taken as a given and that took place more sporadically. Tatiana described her family unit as being made up of a nuclear family with no real social and family network of support in the vicinity:

'We don't have family in Norway so we socialize with us, ourselves, in the family and probably some of our friends, but we do not belong to the area where we live now. It's a nice area and we're going to live there for many years. We actually moved to Bergen two years ago only so [...] we are like not only foreigners but we also do not belong to this area.'

Not having their parents around to help was seen as having an effect on family life and she explained that *'we actually have a nanny too [...] just because we don't have parents, so we need somebody to help in the evenings, to collect him from kindergarten so we don't have to hurry.'* Tatiana also explained that with both herself and her husband having demanding careers, the presence of extra help was necessary in order for the everyday life of the family to function and for both parents to be able to work full-time.

Lena discussed her own limited work situation in relation to having children in a context with little available support from extended family members:

'I worked for a few weeks in the autumn, but not so much, because with two children you have to...it has been a break [from work]. We don't have family here. Only my husband's son, an adult son of 30 years old. Almost no other people. When you have two children you can't do a lot of things.'

From this comment it could be understood that her mothering role of caring for her children was not seen as being easily combined with labour participation in the context of immigration. Since Russian cultural expectations of childrearing practice involve child-care being shared by wider family members, the lack of this support network in Norway had contributed the choice of this mother to take on a full-time child-caring role whilst her children were young.

Extended family members were seen by Nina as not only having the role of caring for children when parents were not able to, but also as taking part in other tasks as part of a close relationship with children. She herself was divorced and she described a situation of mothering without family support: *'So I had to read in the evenings, for hours [...] and so, it creates a certain atmosphere. Since we don't have any grandmothers that could do it, tell fairy stories, I had to work as grandmother, and mother, and aunties and everyone.'* Thus the role taken on by this single mother in a foreign context shows the expectation of the part played by extended family members and also shows how this has influenced her mothering practice.

Discussion

Motherhood in relation to fatherhood

The way in which the mothering roles of my informants were constructed in interaction with the fathering roles of their husbands can be seen in relation to culturally conceived gendered parenting roles as well as the 'doing' of gender in everyday parenting practice. From accounts of everyday practice and the dynamic between work, child-care and housework, a nuanced analysis of the division of tasks between mother and father showed that household tasks were largely practiced as gendered. Whilst some informants described how their husbands would take part in housework, it became clear from discussion of their home situation that it was mothers who took on the main responsibility for housework, seeing this as part of their role. I would, however, argue that there was a degree of negotiation taking place between the roles of mother and father in these families with regards to child-care. Whilst certain caring tasks were regularly carried out by one parent, rather than the other, there was some give-and-take in the responsibility for looking after the children. Some mothers were also able to prioritize time for themselves to travel or to engage in leisure activities, with husbands then taking on sole responsibility for the children for a certain amount of time. I would thus argue that my informants constructed their motherhood around what they saw and experienced as more involved fathering practice, allowing room for negotiation with regards to time-use in their lives as not only mothers and wives but also women with their own interests.

Descriptions of father-child relationships in the families of my informants were to a large extent in line with contemporary representations of fatherhood that emphasize the emotional closeness between father and child and the increased involvement of fathers in child-care.²¹⁹ However, whilst the husbands of my interviewees can be understood as having

²¹⁹ Brandth, B. and Kvande, E., 1998, op. cit.

incorporated child-care as part of their fathering practice, the nature of the child-care which was practiced can be understood as being gendered in relation to how fathers, as opposed to mothers, carried out this practice. In this study, the role of mothers as taking on most responsibility for organizational tasks in relation to the children can be seen in comparison with the role of fathers as prioritizing spending time playing with the children. These findings are in line with research carried out by Bø in the Norwegian context, where she recognised the fact that mothers took on more practical responsibility for children than did fathers.²²⁰ This responsibility often took the form of ‘mental work’ in which time and mental and emotional effort was put into ‘seeing what needs to be done; it means remembering, reminding, explaining, understanding and worrying’.²²¹ It thus involved having an overview of needs and tasks related to their children’s lives. According to Brandth and Kvande, the care-giving practiced by fathers in Norway who had taken paternity leave was gendered and based on ‘being together and doing something together’ with their children.²²² This ‘masculine care’, contrasted to the care given by mothers, involved becoming friends with their children, taking them on outdoor activities and playing together with them. In this way, they argued that child-care had been incorporated into the fathering role as part of their construction of masculinity.

In relation to this project, the construction of motherhood based on a practical responsibility for child-care was arguably partly in reaction to the nature of child-care performed by fathers. The involvement of husbands in the caring for young children was often highlighted, especially in relation to the fact that they would change diapers and bathe children, which could be considered typically ‘female’ tasks. However, when it came to time spent with slightly older children, whilst fathers prioritized time spent with their children as time for play and activities, mothers felt the need to balance different aspects of their mothering role, both child-care and housework. Some of my informants also stressed the amount of time that was spent together as a family which they understood as typically ‘Norwegian’ family-time, and thus a more gender-neutral form of child-care was practiced by both parents when carrying out activities together with their children. Nevertheless, the nature of time that mothers spent alone with their children was seen by some as both different to that of fathers and to a certain extent compromised by their need to have an overview of the household. This gendered child-care practice is thus very much in line with the findings of Bø, and Brandth and Kvande, and the

²²⁰ Bø, I., *op. cit.*, p. 440

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 444

²²² Brandth, B. and Kvande, E., 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 301-302

way in which mothers related to the fathering practice of their husbands in the Norwegian context.

Gendered parenting roles can also be understood as being influenced by the changing structures of families in the context of immigration. Tummala-Narra has argued that there are gendered challenges for immigrant mothers in that the lack of wider family support in child-care often increases their burden and amount of responsibility in a foreign context.²²³ In line with these findings, many of my informants experienced the effects of a limited social network, namely in relation to a lack of practical and emotional support. For Lena, this also meant that her role as mother was seen as having to adjust in order for her children to be properly looked after, despite her later use of kindergarten services. Part of her explanation for the more traditional arrangement of parenting roles in her family was that she felt it necessary to give more weight to child-care and less to labour participation in the context of immigration where it would be too much to combine family and work without a sufficient network of support. The gendered implications of the lack of family support for other informants was also evident in fact that many chose to mention the regular and extended visits of grandparents, who would get involved in housework and child-care, and the difference this made in terms of support for their roles as mothers.

Cultural expectations and parenting practice

Through discussion of the family situations of my informants, two opposing categories of fathers had emerged. ‘Russian fathers’ were often seen in relation to fathers in Norway or ‘international’ fathers, with the practice of the former being to a large extent equated with a traditional construction of fatherhood, and that of the latter being seen as part of a western, more progressive way of fathering. Fathering practice was thus seen in relation to the social and cultural context within which it was situated and the most significant difference recognised between these fathering roles was the involvement of fathers in the Norway in caring for babies and young children and, to a certain extent, their involvement in housework. These cultural differences were understood as having an influence on the experience of motherhood of women in Russia and in Norway.

The balance between the culturally expected roles of mother and father in Russia and the opportunity for a shared division of parenting tasks in the Norwegian context must be understood as significant in the interpretation that these women had of their own situations.

²²³ Tummala-Narra, P., op. cit.

My research participants chose to highlight the ‘helpfulness’ of their husbands as opposed the degree of gender equality that was being practiced, with only Katya discussing explicitly the ideology of gender equal participation. For many the comparison with the situation for mothers in Russia or women married to Russian men meant that their current situation was seen very much in a positive light. In the family context, their roles as mothers were understood in relation to both child-care and being overseers of housework but the extensive involvement of their husbands in child-care, especially in the caring for babies and young children, was not an expectation and was thus a pleasant surprise for many.

My informants recognised the influence of expected childrearing roles in Norway as well as the influence and possibilities of the Norwegian social and institutional setting on the practice of their husbands as fathers. Research on immigrant motherhood in relation to gendered parenting has shown that immigration to Western countries has often led to more shared parenting practice in families that come from a context where traditional gender relations are the norm. This has been argued by George in the case of middle-class Indian immigrants in the US, where their main point of reference was the parenting practices in their native country.²²⁴ Whilst some families had maintained a more traditional pattern of gendered parenting, some dual-earning families had been influenced by the gender ideology in the new context and negotiation had taken place, with women demanding more equal participation from their husbands and husbands adjusting their parenting roles to become more involved. As in this and others studies where immigrant mothers have gained more negotiating power in the context of immigration through labour participation,²²⁵ I have identified a similar sense of negotiation in relation to the sharing of parental responsibilities in the case of my research participants. The majority of mothers in my study were educated and working full-time and this arguably allowed for more co-operation and negotiation as to the sharing of child-care responsibilities in relation to balancing the careers of both parents, or even being able at times to prioritize one’s own career.

However, in relation to the negotiation of unpaid labour, there is perhaps more to be said for the influence of my informants’ own Russian cultural expectations of fatherhood on their husbands’ fathering practice in the Norwegian context. The division of household tasks and child-care was arguably less understood in relation to a negotiation for gender equality and more in relation to the willingness of their husbands to be involved in family responsibilities. In Danielsen’s study of cross-cultural marriages, she argued that in marriages between women

²²⁴ George, S. M., op. cit.

²²⁵ Rolls, C. and Chamberlain, M., op. cit.

from countries with a more traditional pattern of gender relations and men in Western contexts there was often contentment on both sides and a 'win-win' situation due to the behaviour of each spouse exceeding the cultural expectations of the other.²²⁶ In relation to the accounts of my informants, the behaviour of their husbands was placed in contrast to that of Russian men, and thus they were conscious of the difference in their own situation and that of women in Russia. Also, in Fjeld's study of Latin American immigrant mothers in the Norwegian context she found that some of her interviewees talked of shared parenting practice with their Norwegian husbands where each had their own responsibilities, without the need to talk specifically of gender equality and equal division of labour.²²⁷ In my study, it was clear that my informants were aware of societal expectations of gender equality in the Norwegian context and yet, as in the above example, had not come to expect '50-50' sharing of household tasks as part of parenting roles in their family.

The way that my informants presented their own situation in relation to the dual points of reference of both Russian and Norwegian childrearing practices and gender relations, meant that they would often position motherhood and fatherhood as a balance between Russian cultural expectations and Norwegian reality. However, whereas in the previous chapter I have shown how some mothers identified substantially with what they understood as the Norwegian approach to childrearing, and others positioned themselves more in-between the two extremes of 'Russian' and 'Norwegian' cultural practices; in this chapter, there was a more clear orientation towards Norwegian parenting roles. The situation for mothers in Russia, and the traditional gendered division of labour in Russian families, is something that my informants distanced themselves from and used as a point of reference to show how different their experience of motherhood could have been, and how contrasting their current situation in Norway was. The gender relations and socio-cultural influences of the Norwegian context were something towards which they had orientated themselves and which they recognised as having positively influenced the way they had constructed motherhood, namely in relation to the more involved practice of their husbands and the increased possibility for negotiating their mothering role.

²²⁶ Danielsen, K., 'Kjærlighet uten grenser. Krysskulturelle ekteskap – kulturell forankring og individuell erfaring', *Sosiologisk tidsskrift*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2009, pp. 99-119

²²⁷ Fjeld, Å. K. W., op. cit.

Chapter 8: Cultural identity and culture transmission

In this chapter I will explore the role that the cultural identity of my informants and the extent of their feelings of connectedness to both Norway and Russia played in the relationship between mother and child and the sense of cultural identity that they encouraged in their children. Through discussion of the perceived importance that a sense of connectedness to Russian culture had in their own lives and the lives of their children, I will explore the approach to acculturation and enculturation of mothers bringing up children in a social and cultural context that is different from their native country. The role of a mother to impart cultural knowledge to her children as well as the role of native language in the relationship between mother and child will also be discussed in order to enrich the overall picture.

The situation of having a family and bringing up children in a foreign context meant that for most of my informants they themselves were the main source of Russian language and culture for their children. Of my nine informants two women were married to Russian men, three to Norwegian men, one was married to a Brazilian and one to a Welshman, and two had largely brought up their children as single mothers; hence there was diversity in this aspect of their family contexts. In this chapter I will explore the specific challenges of bi-cultural and multi-cultural family situations and the interplay between different cultural influences. I will also explore the nature of the links that these women and their children had to Russia and Russian culture, and argue that they have adopted an integrative strategy of acculturation in which transnational behaviour has played a significant part. In relation to this discussion, the nature of cultural identity itself will be taken up in relation to Ferdman and Horenczyk's definition, which gives weight to the individual understanding of and relation to the defining features of a 'cultural group'. I will thus explore the nature of the way in which these women included language; cultural knowledge and traditions; and family links, as a part of their understanding and encouragement of a Russian cultural identity.

Cultural identity, values and belonging

The relationships that my informants described having with their native culture and country were varied. As explained by Tatiana, *'life is different and I do not compare my life in the Soviet Union and life in Norway. If I could compare, it's like living like a princess, basically, here. You know, it's so different.'* She highlighted the fact that she saw these two realities as being separate from one another and explained that she had become accustomed to her current life. Since her mother lived in the North of Norway, she rarely travelled to Russia and from

this discussion it became clear that she saw her life and future as now being based in Norway. Olga was in a similar position: *'I have become completely, you could say, Norwegian'*. Her feeling of connectedness to Russia was to a large extent linked to family that lived there and had been weakened after the loss of certain family members. She explained that she travelled back every summer but felt that there would perhaps be fewer family trips to Russia in the future. She did, however, maintain strong ties with her sister in Russia through visits and regular communication. Natasha was close to Olga in this respect, by feeling *'more Norwegian than Russian, perhaps'* but still being very conscious of her Russian cultural identity.

Other interviewees saw their lives as more cosmopolitan since they were married to men of different nationalities, had travelled and lived in different places and also had family and friends that lived in different countries around the world. Katya described the Russian part of herself as *'something that you can't take away from us. It is simply there,'* but explained that, since she moved from her parent's house at the age of 21 into a Norwegian family and a new cultural environment, she had had different life experiences than other Russian women. She explained that she *'has become more international, you could say,'* since she had adapted to life in Norway whilst still recognising her cultural background as informing her sense of self. Sonya and Anna also saw themselves and their family as being essentially international. Having travelled widely as part of her career, Sonya had married a man of Brazilian nationality, and she saw her time in Norway as being a stage in her life and thus as more temporary. She kept strong personal links with her Russian family, being often visited by her parents in Norway and spending some holidays together with family in Russia. Anna had family ties to both Russia and Germany and travelled regularly with her husband and children to both countries.

Oxana and Lena had also lived in different countries around the world which they described as having an influence on their points of reference and their cultural identities. Oxana had spent many years in America before moving to Norway and described how she had *'a cosmopolitan perspective on many things'*. According to Lena, if someone asked her where she was from, she would answer *'born in Moscow, German citizen and live in Norway.'* This implied that she saw her cultural identity as being made up of the different stages, and thus cultural contexts, that had been part of her life.

On the other end of the spectrum, however, Nina identified strongly with her Russian cultural identity and missed her home country, namely the Russian system which she understood and her loved ones that lived there. She kept close contact with family and friends in Russia and described fond memories of a happy childhood to which she often referred. It is

clear from the overview given above that my nine informants can be seen as positioned on a spectrum of 'Norwegianness' to 'Russianness' in relation their own sense of belonging.

It was however notable that the nature of feelings of connectedness to both Norway and Russia came across even more strongly in discussions of the type of relationship that these mothers wished their children to have with these two countries. A number of my informants recognised their children's feelings of belonging to Norway and Norwegian culture as a consequence of their growing up in this context. Sonya saw her family as being international with plans to move abroad in the future and perhaps even to Brazil where her husband was from. However, when talking about their time in Norway she explained that *'since my kids were born here, for them to keep Norwegian language, I was thinking it would be good for us to stay a few more years here and then maybe move somewhere else'*; and in relation to Bergen specifically, *'my kids were born here and they lived here for such a long time. We kind of have strong roots to this place.'* Thus, for this mother, Norway as a country was linked to the birth and early life of her children and she wanted this part of her children's identity to be strong before moving to another country. The understanding of her children's Norwegian identity was linked not only to feelings of belonging but also to their knowledge of the Norwegian language. However, Sonya also emphasized the fact that she wanted her daughter to be connected to Russia, to feel connected to the place that she herself came from. This was despite the fact that she had a somewhat negative outlook on the situation in contemporary Russia which had affected her own sense of connection to her native country:

'Politically I'm completely against the way that Russia is taking now. It's making me very upset the situation in Ukraine and everything. It's an extremely sad story. But still you know even being so pissed off with my government and president and the situation ongoing in Russia I still want her to be connected to Russia.'

Thus her own relationship with her native country was seen as somewhat separate from the sense of Russian cultural identity that she wished for her daughter.

Other informants who expressed a negative attitude towards the social situation in contemporary Russia were to a large extent rejecting certain prevailing values of the society, which was creating a strong sense of distance between the country of their youth and the Russia that they recognised and understood today. For Olga, her enthusiasm for speaking Russian to her children and encouraging their use of the language had gradually lessened, partly due to her own relationship with the country. She described negative feelings towards current materialistic values in Russia. In her home city she saw adults being much occupied with *'prestige and money, and which coat and fur you are wearing. How much the shoes that you*

have on cost,’ with this materialism understood as being passed on to the next generation. Regarding her continued use of Russian language with her children, she commented that *‘I am not completely sure that they need it now in their future life with the situation as it is in Russia now. I am not sure that there will be a lot of [Russian speaking].’* She also recognised the connection that her children had to Norwegian society, especially her younger child, and had adjusted her own language use in order to fit this: *‘There will be more Norwegian. Now and then it is easier for me to say things in Norwegian than in Russian because they understand me in Norwegian. But my older daughter, she understands more [Russian] than my youngest. My boy understands a lot less.’*

Katya and Natasha also expressed a negative attitude towards the situation in contemporary Russia in comparison with life in Norway, which had affected the way in which they identified with their native country and how they planned to bring up their children. Katya had come to realise that:

‘In Russia people have a lot of prejudice about things [...] it may be that it is me who has learned that, since I moved to another country, so I have become a bit more open [...] In Russia it is like everyone should have higher education. If you don’t have it then you are worth less and it isn’t...so I don’t have any ambition that my children should take higher education. I think that they should find their own way and should be satisfied with what they are doing.’

Here she explained the influence that living in Norway had had on her own attitude to others in society and also to what she wanted for her children in the future. She placed what she saw as prejudice found in Russian society in contrast to an ‘openness’ that she had been influenced by and which had in turn made her feel more in sync with attitudes found in Norwegian society. Her own positive attitude thus influenced the future that she saw for her children in Norway. Natasha also expressed a sense of distance to the class division she saw in contemporary Russian society which affected her ideas of what she wanted and did not want for her own children. She explained that:

‘In Russia that which is happening now is that children are being very well looked after [...and] look at other people as if they were insects and like ‘he earns less than me. Dad is a lawyer, he there is nothing.’ So their relationship to life is that ‘I am the king of the universe.’ [...] So there is a very large class division now and what is happening there now...I like it less and less. You just hear about it and are shocked. When I was at school it was a bit different, easier, but now it has become a bit negative.’

The class snobbery described here affected the way that she saw Russian society, namely in comparison with what she remembered experiencing when growing-up in Russia. This created a tension between positive memories of childhood and a negative response to contemporary developments, which influenced her understanding of what it meant to be “Russian”. Natasha

wished to distance her own children from certain negative values that she saw as being prevalent in her native country, but she also encouraged a feeling of connectedness to certain aspects of Russian culture in her children. The aspects that she chose to emphasize in the upbringing of her children were Russian language and Russian holiday traditions, which could be seen as elements linked to her own upbringing and chosen understanding of Russian cultural identity.

Nina, on the other hand, maintained strong emotional and personal ties to her homeland, which was also the country where her daughter was born and lived until she was four years old. The importance that she placed on the relationship with her native country was reflected in the joy that she felt at her daughter also sustaining personal ties with Russia: *'What makes me feel better is that my daughter has maintained a friendship from when she was so small and was in the same group at nursery. And when she comes to Moscow they meet and have fun together [...] it pleases me. She manages to keep that childhood contact.'* Through this example the sense of the importance to her of her daughter's connection and feeling of belonging to Russia becomes apparent. She is 'pleased' both for her daughter and for herself.

In relation to her own cultural identity, Oxana referred to the fact that her point of reference in relation to her homeland was understood as a Soviet one:

'But I've been raised in the Soviet Union and that's quite different. You know when people say "you're from Russia?" I say I've been raised in the Soviet Union, you know. The way Russia is now, I actually don't have very good understanding of the way things are in Russia, contemporary Russia, because I moved out in '96 and have just been visiting. So my cultural background it's Russian of course but it's also a lot of...in terms of many things they are Soviet, now I understand there is a division there.'

Her Soviet upbringing was often used as an example when talking about her approach to mothering, and was the basis for her understanding of the 'Russian' cultural identity that she encouraged in her children. Whilst she saw herself as having a cosmopolitan and broad perspective that enabled her to view her own upbringing in a critical manner, she also felt positively towards many aspects of what she understood as Russian culture and she wished her children to incorporate these as part of their cultural identities.

What appears from the examples that I have just given is that the majority of my informants based their understanding of Russian culture on memories of their upbringing in Soviet Russia; but whereas for Sonya, Olga, Katya and Natasha the contrast that they perceived between their past memories and their negative picture of Russia today had problematized their act of defining what a Russian connection would mean in the lives of their children; for Oxana, Lena and Nina their understanding of Russian cultural identity was less problematic. Tatiana

and Anna had more ambivalent attitudes towards their upbringing in Soviet Russia, focusing more on their present lives in Norway, which also had an impact on how they chose to define and encourage a sense of ‘Russianness’ for their children, as will be discussed. Therefore, just as interesting as whether these mothers viewed Russian cultural identity as being important in their own lives and the lives of their children, was the way in which they chose to understand this connection to Russia and how it would translate in the context of constructing immigrant motherhood. In the next sections, I will explore the importance and challenge of Russian language learning in the lives of their children and also the role that language, cultural knowledge and personal links would play in forming their cultural identity.

Russian language learning: multi-lingual and Norwegian speaking families

The majority of my informants wanted their children to be able to speak Russian but the extent to which this was seen as important or manageable varied. The degree of importance of Russian language learning was something that was commented on explicitly and which also came across in examples of the effort made and the actions taken by my informants. All had explained how they had initially decided to speak Russian to their children from birth but a number of mothers explained the difficulty they experienced in keeping up their efforts.

Since seven of my nine informants were married to non-Russian men, or had largely been single mothers, they acted as the main source of Russian language for their children. Whilst discussing the language abilities of her three children, Anna commented that *‘It could be good to teach them to speak Russian. But we’ll see how it goes, it’s a bit hard. I have to be more consistent actually...with the first one.’* Thus she pointed to the fact that the desire for her children to know Russian language could potentially be outweighed by the challenge of speaking enough Russian with them. She gave an example of how she had struggled to make her eldest son speak Russian with her: *‘He tries to speak it with me because I force him and he was crying at the table for an hour the first time when I ask him to tell me “give me ice cream”. And I asked him to say it in Russian and he was crying for an hour.’* This comment, which was communicated in a light-hearted tone, shows how she had pushed her son to speak Russian, and she went on to say that while it was upsetting for him at first, he had then gone on to make more of an effort. This example illustrates the challenges experienced by both mothers and their children in a foreign context.

Sonya (Brazilian husband) also gave examples of how she challenged and encouraged her daughter to use Russian words in order to incorporate them into everyday mother-child communication:

'And I was telling her "No, I don't understand you." So I was forcing her to remember and then she is like telling me something like "I want grapes", and she was saying grapes in Portuguese, and I was telling her "I don't know what you're asking". And then it took her a few seconds but then she remembered the word in Russian and then she said it and then I give it to her. Or like sometimes if she doesn't remember I tell her "you mean... 'that'?" and then I wait for her to repeat this word so she will keep in mind actually what's right.'

Not only does this example show the effort put in by this mother but also exemplifies the challenge of having a multi-lingual family. Being married to a Brazilian man, living in Norway and hearing English language films and music, meant that her children were exposed to three, and sometimes four, different languages in their daily lives. Another example from Sonya also made clear the challenge the mother being the main source of Russian language for her children:

'I was working this summer in a project off-shore in the Faroe Islands, so I was on a three-three schedule. I was away for three weeks and my parents-in-law were here so [the children] were being surrounded so much by Portuguese at home and Norwegian in kindergarten. So when I came back like I could see that sometimes a few words...she was saying something to me in Russian and one word she was forgetting and she included it rather in Norwegian or Portuguese.'

Thus this mother noticed the weakening of her daughter's fluency after she had been absent, to which she would respond with more effort in Russian speaking.

Tatiana (Welsh husband), when discussing living in Norway, commented that: *'how it impacts my motherhood: I can see my child is struggling with three languages, that's the only thing. It's not because we are in Norway, it's just because we are in a different country. And we both have a different language.'* She saw the added challenge of bringing up a child in a not only a foreign context but in a multi-lingual family. With their home language being mainly English, and Norwegian when out in society, Russian speaking was only realistic for Tatiana when she was alone with her child and she explained that: *'I try to speak Russian but I'm not very good at it. I swap to Norwegian quite often'*. Thus it could be argued that a common theme in these accounts is that the challenge for these mothers was accentuated by the fact that they were not only bringing up children in a foreign context where their children were not naturally exposed to Russian language, but also the fact that their spouses spoke an additional language meant that there was more potential for their children to become confused and fewer chances for them to speak Russian in a family setting.

For those women married to Norwegian men, the fact of the immigrant context being a 'foreign' one was less important than it being their husband's native country. Norwegian language and cultural features could thus be seen as having a more dominant influence in these

bi-lingual as opposed to multi-lingual families. As in Remennick's study of Russian women and men married to Native Israelis, where the dominance of hegemonic cultural practices were felt strongly in the family context, resulting in a 'subtractive rather than additive' acculturation, and where the imbalance of power was found to limit the ability of Russian parents to pass on Russian language and cultural practices,²²⁸ so too did some of my informants experience a similar challenge. Both Anna and Olga were married to Norwegian men and were themselves very positive towards many social and cultural aspects of the Norwegian context. When it came to teaching Russian language to their children, Anna had pointed to the challenge of putting sufficient effort into speaking Russian and achieving an equal place for Russian language as part of family communication, and Olga had commented that not only was it easier to speak Norwegian in order to be understood by her children but that her motivation to stress Russian language learning in their largely 'Norwegian' family life was lessening. Thus, in the case of informants where Norwegian was their husband's native language and was the main language of family communication, where and their children were being exposed to Norwegian cultural influences both in kindergarten/school and in the family domain, it was arguably an easier situation for the children, but a more challenging situation for the mother wishing to maintain Russian cultural influences in their children's lives.

Russian language, cultural identity and connection between mother and child

It follows from the discussion above that the teaching of their native language in a foreign setting became a more accented part of the mothering role of a number of my informants who were not only the main source of Russian language for their children, but also the main driving force behind this language learning. The influence of their children's life in the Norwegian context and their interaction with Norwegian child-care institutions was also recognised as a challenge in relation to the encouraging a sense of Russian cultural identity.

With the aim of making their children able to understand and speak Russian, these mothers would not only speak Russian with their children but also actively employ other strategies of exposing them to the language. One strategy used by many was reading to their children in Russian and showing them Russian television programmes. Anna had commented:

'I try to read them Russian books. I try not to read Norwegian at all actually. So when I put them to bed I read Russian and also I tried to start them on Russian cartoons [...] I basically try to choose those that are dubbed. So I don't exactly go and choose Russian cartoons, only a few bits. A lot of things are translated into Russian, the same as what they have on the children's channel. And that's easy, and I hope it helps a little bit.'

²²⁸ Remennick, L., op. cit., p. 734

Here it is clear that she had tried to incorporate Russian language into their daily routine and make it more fun for her children by showing them Western cartoons which they were already familiar with but which had been dubbed with Russian voices. Oxana also used a similar strategy in that she read Norwegian contemporary literature translated into Russian to her children to incorporate Norwegian culture into Russian language learning. Other mothers chose to read Russian fairy stories when reading in Russian to their children but maintained an emphasis on the exposure to Russian language.

Another part of these mothers' efforts, something that had been or was being utilized by five of informants, was the attendance of their children at Russian Sunday schools. These lessons took place for a few hours each weekend and taught Russian language and culture to children of different ages. Olga and Natasha had explained how the teachers there were professionals that put focus on reading, writing and memory exercises for younger children and that older children would also learn classical Russian poetry and literature. Common to the accounts given by a number of informants was the time and effort that they and other Russian mothers had put into this activity. Whilst her own children no longer attended Russian school, Natasha explained that *'it was in town and many travelled far for their children. Some came from Dale, Knarvik, Ålesund...so it was quite a lot of commuting,'* thus emphasizing the distance that Russian parents were willing to drive in order to have their children attend. Both of her own children had attended for two-three years until they were able to speak Russian, *'to understand and be understood'*, which was her main aim for their attendance, as was Olga's. These mothers also highlighted the fact that they would help their children with Russian language homework. Thus the act of taking their children to Russian school was a key strategy used by these mothers to advance their children's Russian language abilities.

It was important for many of my informants to teach their children not only Russian language but also cultural knowledge and tradition as part of encouraging a sense of Russian cultural identity. For Natasha, who was married to a Norwegian man, a sense of Russian cultural identity was linked to contact with Russian family and also the celebration of Russian holidays. In relation to her own sense of cultural identity she explained that she felt *'more Norwegian than Russian, perhaps, but I am indeed Russian and in that respect now we celebrate New Year's Eve and Russian traditions.'* Thus this aspect of Russian culture was something that had been incorporated into the holiday celebrations of the family and that was reinforced in the Russian school that she had sent her daughters to at weekends: *'they were very good with New Year's celebrations, Russian celebrations with the children. There was a performance with poems, songs and going round the Christmas tree. So traditions were there*

and then we had a pancake party in the spring [...] so it was very fun to be a part of. Likewise, Olga also emphasized the cultural element of the Russian school that she took her children to, explaining that families would *'now and then meet each other at Christmas, New Year's Eve, very popular, and then you had to be there for pancake week [...] when people come to be together.'* Thus the main Russian religious and cultural holidays that were celebrated at the Russian school were seen to be of value in terms of enjoyment, the maintaining of Russian traditions, and giving the children a sense of Russian cultural values.

Part of Sonya's motivation for wanting her children to have a command of the Russian language was the way in which she saw language as playing the most important role in encouraging a sense of Russian identity. She explained that, in the relationship with her daughter, *'I think we should just continue to do what we were doing and kind of keep the language which is the most important connection to her roots'*. Also, in discussing her daughter's sense of cultural belonging, she commented that:

'She's too young to know like the history of the country and everything but she knows that her mother is Russian, her grandparents are Russian [...] she is very excited when I tell her I am taking her to Moscow and she found this flag from the Olympics, so yeah [she said] 'I will take it tomorrow to the place with me' [laughs]. It's very funny.'

On this trip to Moscow with her daughter, Sonya had chosen to take her to see historical sites and cultural events in the city. Through forging a connection to Russian family and Russian culture, (even knowledge of the Russian flag), this mother had encouraged a feeling of connectedness to Russia and, through this experience, a connection to herself as a mother with a Russian cultural background. She also discussed the challenge of reconciling the strong Norwegian cultural influences in her daughter's life with a sense of connectedness to Russia: *'it's very difficult I understand for her [...] to know that she belongs to Russia because I think in her head she is kind of more Norwegian [...] she was born here and she is in a more Norwegian environment but I want her to keep these roots.'* Thus Norwegian cultural influences and sense of belonging was understood as something that was already part of her daughter's identity but that her connection to Russia was something that she as a mother had to actively encourage.

For most of my informants there was a clear sense that reading to their children in Russian was an important part of the mother-child relationship. Sonya explained that *'we have a lot of Russian books here so I am reading a lot. Like I'm reading Russian fairy tales, all the stories.'* She also pointed to the fact that her daughter was aware of the different books that mother and father would read to her:

'We have Russian books and Portuguese, Brazilian books and like sometimes she is like opening the book and she is remembering that her father was reading it and says "oh no, this is not the book you can tell me. Let's take another one, a Russian book" because she cannot read but she understands that this is a Portuguese book so I won't be able to tell her that one.'

A connection through Russian language and reading was thus part of this informant's relationship with her daughter, which was seen by both mother and daughter as distinct from the relationship which was shared between father and child. Natasha too explained that: *'we read in Russian every night before I put them to bed [...] The eldest wants me to read in Norwegian so we vary it a bit, or I translate. If she doesn't understand some terms then I have to translate them into Norwegian but I try to keep to Russian fairy tales.'* For this mother the significance of reading was clearly linked to the imparting of Russian cultural knowledge. It was important that her children were exposed to Russian stories, even though her daughter was keen to read in Norwegian. She also commented on the fact that she tried to encourage her husband to read to the children when she was away but that it didn't come naturally for him. It was thus seen by Natasha as part of her relationship with her daughters.

Oxana also explained that she read in Russian to her children and took pride in stating that: *'my daughters speak Russian and they read and they write in Russian [...] I put a lot of effort into it.'* She explained that she herself and other Russian mothers *'really want to preserve the culture so we put the effort that they learn how to read and write Russian, you know. Reading is a very large part of our culture. You teach your children to read. You read to them.'* Thus for this mother it was not only the language of what was being read that was seen as important but also the content of the literature as well as the act of reading itself, through which her children were socialized into what was seen as Russian cultural practice. Oxana also encouraged her daughters to challenge themselves in their reading and gave the example of agreeing to purchase new bicycles for them on the completion of their first novel. She expressed great pride in their willingness and the enjoyment they found in reading and explained how they had been praised by a writer of children's literature on one occasion when she had seen them reading on public transport. Thus these many examples show the importance that Russian language and cultural practice had for these mothers and the role that a Russian cultural link played in the mother-child relationship.

Mother's role to impart knowledge

In the examples above, it has been highlighted that raising children in a foreign context brings an increased consciousness of the role of parents to impart cultural knowledge to their children.

The interplay between the roles of these mothers to enculturate their children and the impact of bringing up children in a context where one's native culture is not dominant, meant that the choice to give importance specifically to Russian cultural knowledge was often a reflective and deliberate one. However, for one of my informants, Nina, the role of imparting cultural knowledge about Russia to her children was seen as independent of the fact that she was living in Norway. For this mother, the teaching of one's cultural knowledge was seen as a major part of the role of a mother and her explanation of what made a 'good mother' for her children included

'To give all that you can, to teach all that you can. Everything that I know, they must know, as I see it. So it is completely necessary for me, since we talk Russian at home [they] must at any rate have an idea of Russian literature, classical literature, and everything that I heard when I was small. So I had to read in the evenings for hours.'

Here it was not only the imparting of cultural knowledge that was important, but the giving of oneself as a mother through the passing on of all possible knowledge. For this mother, it was understood as a 'given' that she would put in the effort to read to her children and take on this active role of teaching her children. As discussed in chapter 6, she was musically educated and had talked enthusiastically of her parents' musical abilities and the cultural milieu in which she grew up. This was encouraged in the upbringing of her own children who both played musical instruments and with her eldest child choosing to study music. A connection can be made between the relationship that Nina had with her own parents and the approach to mothering that she now chose to follow, as well as the sense of recreating her own childhood for her children. This aspect of her mothering was part of her understanding of the normative role for a mother to take and not influenced by bringing up her children in a foreign context: *'To be a mother, is to be a mother. It is the same wherever you are, I feel.'* She did not feel that living in Norway influenced the importance of passing on of Russian cultural knowledge since this was a part of the body of knowledge that she had acquired throughout her life and which she felt it was her duty as a mother to teach to her children. I would argue, however, that the fact that this mother had largely been a single mother could be seen as significant in relation to parenting in the Norwegian context, since inside her home she had sole influence over the bringing up of her children and socializing them in the way that she saw fit.

Native language as genuine communication

Lena and Katya were married to Russian men and had exposed their children solely to Russian language whilst they were very young. According to Lena: *'Our wish was that Russian should come first and therefore we started with our first child at kindergarten at three and a half years*

old. It was our wish that she should speak Russian first, begin with Russian, begin very well, and afterwards start to learn Norwegian.’ This comment suggested a conscious decision made by these parents to prioritize Russian language learning over that of Norwegian, ensuring that the children had a firm grasp of Russian before taking on another language. This shows an awareness of the challenge of bringing up children in a foreign context and the importance of Russian language for these parents. Katya described her situation by explaining that *‘both of my boys, they were at home until they were three years old, the youngest ones. And at home we talk only in Russian, because my husband is Russian [...] So they have of course heard Norwegian a lot everywhere but we don’t talk Norwegian with them, we talk only in Russian.’* The fact that both parents were Russian was thus as an important factor in the decision to use only Russian language to communicate with the children. Norwegian language learning on the other hand was seen as something that the children would be exposed to through life in Norwegian society.

Katya made a point of the fact that she spoke only Russian language to her children, with further explanation for this being that *‘it is quite natural. There is a lot of research that shows that mothers or fathers...parents should talk in their mother-tongue with their children. You can’t convey the same love in another language as you can with your own, right, so it is kind of there it comes from.’* She also gave the example of one of her sons who *‘has never used Russian words in kindergarten whilst the other children have maybe mixed a bit. [...] For him, love for his parents is connected to Russian, so it is very special.’* Here, native language was understood as playing an important role in the communication of love between parents and children and was seen as something that came naturally in this family situation. Sonya also talked about the role that one’s native language plays in communication between mother and child. She explained that she had followed information that she received from a nurse at the health station:

‘It’s actually recommended for parents to keep their language and not to mix anything because you know a lot of people they are kind of trying to maybe speak Norwegian with their kids, thinking it will be easier, and they said no it’s kind of not natural. [...] It will even be a little bit fake for the child. They said keep to your language, just stick to it.’

Whilst these interviewees had all taken the same action in speaking only Russian with their children, with regards to the situation of bringing up children in a foreign context, Lena saw her decision in terms of prioritizing Russian language over Norwegian, whereas Katya explained her course of action as something that was *‘natural’* as part of the communication between parent and child, regardless of the context in which a child is brought up. It is also

significant that these two informants did not recognise Norwegian language and cultural influences as a threat to their children's sense of 'Russianness', rather they were conscious that their children should be able to speak Norwegian well. The fact that the family context was one where only Russian language was spoken could be seen as influencing the way in which these mothers encouraged biculturalism and did not see the Russian cultural identity of their children as being affected by bringing up their children in the Norwegian context.

Communication with other Russian family members, especially grandparents, was also a reason given by several mothers as to why they wanted their children to be able to speak Russian. Anna explained that it was important for her children '*should they be with [Russian] family because they don't speak Norwegian, and not that much English.*' Sonya also commented: '*my grandmother she is like 80 plus years old and for her of course she cannot speak Portuguese, she cannot speak English, she only speaks Russian, so I want them to be able to communicate with each other. So I think it's very important to keep the language.*' All of the mothers in my study discussed visits to Russia to spend time with their family and friends or visits from Russian family to Norway. Natasha discussed the language abilities of her children and explained that '*the youngest gets better after my parents have been here, and they are often here. [...] They are here two times a year at least and if they come then it is for a month. So [the children] start to speak very good Russian.*' Olga also explained that her children learned Russian much quicker when they were in Russia and in close contact with Russian people, as did Sonya, who compared her daughter's progress from one month of speaking Russian in Norway with one week of exposure to the language in Russia. Tatiana did not travel to Russia but her mother who was living in the North of Norway would come to visit her and she would instruct her mother to speak only Russian to her son. Thus many of my informants discussed time spent with Russian family as being a language-learning opportunity for their children, and these regular and important events were greatly valued and actively encouraged.

Russian language: present and future identity

Teaching Russian language to and acquiring Russian citizenship for their children was explained by Tatiana, Anna and Sonya as providing them with a choice as to who they could be in the future. By sharing this knowledge with their children, they were giving them a potential asset and skill. In relation to her son's Russian language, Tatiana explained that:

'It's part of his identity and probably will give him more chances in life in the future. What if he decides to go and live in Russian? What if he decides to have work connected

to Russia, or Russian language? So it's just to give him another dimension in his life and probably it will develop his brains better, I don't know, with more languages so yeah, why not, we try and then he chooses what to do.'

Here Russian language is understood as being part of her son's present identity and also key to him having more choices and possibilities as to what kind of future he could have. Sonya also talked of the giving of choice and in relation to her daughter and son it was explained that:

'She has Russian nationality, she has Russian passport as well so I want her to have this opportunity and when she grows up to decide herself, you know, to have this option. If she would like to try to live there and experience it she would have the possibility of doing it. And I'm giving it to her by giving her the nationality, by teaching her the language, by keeping her connected to the place I am from. Maybe she would not even take this opportunity but at least, at least both of them they have it [...] they have a choice if they want to move to Russia, be Russian, they can do it. If they want to.'

From previous examples as to why Russian language and culture, as well as a sense of connectedness to Russia, was important in the lives of her children, Sonya's explanations were very much linked to the giving of herself as a mother and the significance of her own Russian roots as part of her children's sense of cultural identity. In this comment, there is also a sense that through her mothering practice and the knowledge that she is imparting, she is giving her children the choice as to the future of their connection to Russia and the importance of this part of their identity.

Also, in relation to the type of cultural identity and future that these mothers see for their children, Anna explained that in naming her sons, she and her husband *'needed to find a name which is not Scandinavian and is easy to understand in Russia and Germany and all over the world'*. This indicated that she wanted her children to have the potential to embrace the Russian and German parts of their parents' identities and base their future in other countries around the world, rather than being wholly defined by their upbringing in Norway.

Discussion

Acculturation and enculturation in the context of immigrant parenting

In this chapter, the approach to enculturation adopted by my informants regarding their children's sense of cultural identity has been looked at in relation to their own strategies of acculturation i.e. their relationship with their country and culture of origin and the cultural context of their present life. Tatiana had to a great extent assimilated, embracing Norwegian values and practices, maintaining few links with her country of origin, and focusing mainly on Russian language as part of her own and her child's Russian cultural identity. Nina had to a certain extent separated herself from Norwegian cultural influences, maintaining a firm sense

of Russian cultural identity and strong emotional and personal links with Russia. Between these two contrasting approaches, my other informants had adopted individual integrative acculturation strategies in relation to what they understood as elements of Norwegian and Russian culture. Many saw themselves as having an ‘international’ or cosmopolitan perspective on life but referred to influences from both of these cultural contexts when describing their own sense of cultural identity. In relation to the link between my informants’ own sense of Russian cultural identity and the cultural identification with Russia that they encouraged in their children, the nature of the relationship that these women had with their native country could be seen to have played a significant part in what they wished for their children. However, this was not a straight forward relationship, as I will argue later in the next section.

The complex interplay between acculturation and enculturation in immigrant parenthood, where parents must navigate their own place in the new context as well as their children’s, has been discussed by Inman et. al.²²⁹ In their research on Indian immigrants in the US, they found that, whilst these parents were encouraging biculturalism in their children, their selective acculturation was not merely a matter of choice but a struggle of negotiating conflicting cultural demands. Main challenges were the difficulty of combining and reconciling certain native cultural practices and beliefs with western cultural values, and the dominant influence of the cultural context on their children’s lives. In my study, research participants also understood that the social and cultural features of the Norwegian context were having a significant influence on their children, both in relation to their sense of belonging and to their cultural identity. Norwegian language and cultural knowledge was understood by many as something that their children would inevitably learn from the Norwegian institutional setting. The aim of encouraging a sense of Russian cultural identity in their children in their present context was expressed as a challenge in relation to a multi-lingual family situation, where children were exposed to multiple languages and cultural influences, and a bi-lingual context, where Norwegian cultural influences were dominant both inside and outside the home.

In the context of immigration and this role of parents to enculturate their children in a foreign setting, Russian language and culture can be seen as playing an important part in the relationship between mother and child. For some informants their native language was a means of genuine communication and expression of love between parent and child, and other Russian family members. Russian language and citizenship was understood as being a part of children’s present cultural identity and also providing choice and possibilities in their future. The teaching

²²⁹ Inman et al., *op. cit.*

and passing on of Russian language, cultural knowledge and traditions were seen by a number of informants as part of the giving of themselves as a mother and creating a link between their own roots and their children's sense of cultural belonging. This aspect of the mothering role became accented for most in the context of immigrant motherhood where my informants were usually the main source of this knowledge for their children. However, in the case of one informant this mothering role of passing on cultural knowledge was seen as irrespective of context and situation. In some cases, where women were married to Norwegian or non-Russian men, the exclusivity of Russian cultural elements shared between mother and child made this relationship more defined and separate from the father-child relationship; something that created a link between the past and present lives of these mothers and the present and future lives of their children.

It came across clearly that for all informants, except the two that were married to Russian men and who spoke only Russian at home, constant effort was required by mothers that wished their children to not only gain but also maintain their knowledge of Russian language. The combination of the deliberate actions taken by my informants could be understood as strategies for the transmission of Russian language and cultural knowledge: these actions were speaking Russian with their children, reading Russian books and showing Russian cartoons, taking them to Russian school during the weekends, and also encouraging language learning during time spent with Russian family. For all, Russian language was the most significant part of a Russian cultural identity. These findings are comparable with those of research by Vaynman on the encouragement of bilingualism in Russian-Norwegian families.²³⁰ In this study the main motives behind language learning were found to be family ties, the aspiration of well-roundedness and the importance of identity and, as in the case of my informants, language learning was used as a means of passing on cultural knowledge to their children and instilling a sense of Russian identity. Thus through deliberate and considered action, combined with considerable effort, the mothers in my study exercised agency in order to actively shape the cultural identities of their children.

Cultural identity and transnationalism

In order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the link between acculturation and enculturation, the nature of the relationship that my informants had with their native country and cultural context must be taken into account, explicitly in relation to transnational ties. As

²³⁰ Vaynman, M. J., *op. cit.*

previously noted, the defining element of transnationalism can be understood as the maintenance of multiple cross-border relationships, which can be social, cultural, economic and political links with one's country of origin.²³¹ In this chapter, transnational behaviours have been revealed as part of the strategy used by these mothers to encourage a Russian cultural identity in their children, linked to feelings of connectedness and belonging to Russia. Through visits to Russia, exposure to cultural sites and events, and through the fostering of personal links to Russian friends and family, these mothers encouraged a relationship between their children and their own native country and culture.

In accordance with Sigad and Eiskovits' model of cross-cultural adaptation strategies, which extended Berry's model of acculturation by including transnational behaviour as part of these strategies, the continued social links to Russia that were maintained by my informants can be interpreted as being part of their approach to acculturation. Their cross-border relationships could be understood as part of the way in which they related to their life in Norway, as well as to their own native country. For many, their connection to Russia was not something that existed solely through keeping up Russian cultural traditions within the Norwegian context, but was also maintained through transnational behaviours.

Inspired by the findings of my research project and in order to provide a more fruitful analysis, I would like to add further nuance to Sigad and Eisikovits' model of cross-cultural adaptation strategies by including an historical dimension into the consideration of culture and cultural identity in the process of acculturation. By historical dimension I am referring to historical change and the passing of time. In the case of my informants, the nature of their ongoing relationship with their native country can be understood as having varied effects on the sense of cultural identity that they encouraged in the lives of their children, as well as the way in which they chose to define a Russian cultural identity in the Norwegian context. For my informants, who had grown up in Soviet Russia and moved to Norway during a period of rapid social upheaval, their sense of Russian cultural identity was to large extent linked to memories from their childhoods. Some informants chose to refer almost exclusively to the past, while others discussed their ambivalence towards changes in social and political values in contemporary Russia since the transition from the Soviet regime. The ambivalence of the latter group was in relation to their own sense and understanding of Russian cultural identity, but was heightened when deliberating on what aspects of Russian cultural identity to hand on to their children. Hence, they also gave weight to tradition aspects of Russian culture while

²³¹ Sigad, L. I. and Eisikovits, R. A., *op. cit.*

rejecting certain cultural developments in Russian society. I would argue that the continued transnational links with Russia in the specific context of immigrant motherhood had an influence not only on my informants' own relationship with their native country but also on the way in which chose to understand 'Russian culture' and what a Russian cultural identity could mean in the lives of their children.

Key to this interpretation of cultural identity is an understanding of culture as something that is not fixed but changeable and changing. I would argue that in the dominant models of acculturation that are utilized in much cross-cultural research, culture itself becomes a somewhat static concept, e.g. in relation to the 'culture of origin' to which immigrants might relate. Based on a less static notion of culture, Ferdman and Horenczyk's conceptualization of cultural identity refers to each individual's understanding of the cultural features that characterize her cultural group(s), as well as how she feels about these different features and how she relates them to her own sense of identity.²³² In line with this, my informants' understandings of 'Russian culture' and a 'Russian cultural identity', in bringing up children in the Norwegian cultural context while maintaining transnational links with Russia, were influenced by a dual frame of reference: the Soviet Russia of their childhoods and the social and cultural aspects of contemporary Russia. By incorporating an historical dimension, focus can be given to the ways in which their relationship with Russia and their understanding of Russian cultural identity was not only something that was not fixed but something that was continually being re-negotiated. Thus the relationship between my informants' own sense of cultural identity and the cultural identity that they encouraged in their children must be seen in connection with transnational behaviours. These cross-border links highlight the significance of social, cultural and historical change in the Russian context, and in the context of the progression of their own and their children's lives.

²³² Ferdman, B. M. and Horenczyk, G., op. cit., p. 86

Chapter 9: Concluding discussion

In this study I have explored how Russian women have constructed motherhood in the Norwegian context. I have studied a group of nine Russian immigrant women in Bergen, Norway and have aimed to give a nuanced picture of their mothering ideas, ideals and practices. Sensitivity had been shown to the significance of the specific socio-cultural context within which these women practiced their motherhood and the way in which they conceived of their mothering role in relation to their knowledge of the gender relations and cultural conceptions of motherhood in their host country, Norway, and their native country, Russia. I have understood motherhood as both constructed and contextual, and as part of a broader conceptual framework made up of the following: Baumrind's typology of parenting styles; a culture, gender and social class perspective on parenthood; and the interrelation between acculturation and cultural identity in the context of immigrant parenting. Furthermore, motherhood has been seen as a changing and changeable practice, both within a particular socio-cultural setting and in the context of the lives of these mothers, allowing for the possibility to explore the influence of transnational ties and historical change on the construction of cultural identity and immigrant motherhood.

The interplay between structure and agency has been explored in relation to the way in which my informants had adapted to, and reconciled, what they recognised as the possibilities and limitations of childrearing in Norwegian society. Regarding the position of my informants as Russian immigrant mothers, I have quoted examples that show the capacity of my informants to navigate within the Norwegian social and cultural setting, and their recognition of the advantages and disadvantages of motherhood in this context. The agentic capacity of these women has been brought to the fore as an overarching theme across the three main aspects of my research: motherhood in the Norwegian context, gendered parenthood, and cultural identity and culture transmission.

'Russian' and 'Norwegian' parenting: a dual framework of reference

The perspective of my informants, and an aspect of my own perspective in analysing my research material, was a comparative, cross-cultural approach to immigrant motherhood. In each of my empirical chapters I have explored the cultural reference points used by my informants in order to discuss their own mothering roles, and a recurring theme was the way in which they referred to and positioned themselves in relation to 'Russian' and 'Norwegian' parenting practices and values. The approaches to specific aspects of childrearing of mothers

and fathers in Russia and Norway were depicted in similar ways by my informants, but how these mothers chose to position themselves in relation to these approaches varied from informant to informant and from topic to topic.

Some of my informants expressed a strong identification with parenting values and practices in Norway and frequently used the category 'Russian mothers' as something to distance themselves from. However, the influence of their Russian cultural upbringing was acknowledged in relation to specific mothering practices, namely strictness and boundary setting. Other informants referred to 'Russian mothers' with a 'we' that signalled the sharing of many of the cultural values that they associated with this group. This Russian orientation, however, was also combined with an acknowledgement of the influence that bringing up children in Norway had had on their understanding of 'good' mothering practice and the way in which certain 'Norwegian' values had been incorporated into their mothering approach. Depiction of 'Russian' and 'Norwegian' approaches to parenthood and childhood often became a discussion of two extremes, and my informants largely chose to place themselves somewhere in the middle ground between the two.

In the construction of motherhood in relation to fatherhood, many informants used the behaviour of 'Russian fathers' as a basis for their cultural expectations of both the fathering role and the mothering role. In relation to gendered parenting practice, it became clear that the parenting roles of 'Russian fathers' were equated with a more traditional gendered model of parenting, whilst 'Norwegian fathers' were seen as being more modern or progressive in their approach. The situation for mothers living in Russia, seen in relation to fathers in Russia, was used as a negative example with which to contrast their own situation as mothers in Norway. In fact the majority of my informants positioned the fathering practice of their husbands, whether native Norwegian or not, as essentially 'Norwegian'. Significantly, my informants did not directly relate their own mothering roles to those of Norwegian mothers, and actively distanced their experience from that of Russian mothers. So in terms of gendered parenting they were choosing to be neither fully Russian nor fully Norwegian. Instead they constructed their mothering practice as a response to and as a negotiation with their husband's involved fathering role. This positioning reflected the particular advantages that motherhood in Norway had come to represent.

The way in which my informants and their children related to both the Norwegian and Russian cultural context came through in my exploration of the part that Russian language and culture played in the mother-child relationship and the extent to which a sense of Russian cultural identity was encouraged in the lives of their children. Whilst some mothers felt a close

connection to their homeland through perceived cultural links and personal connections, others had distanced themselves somewhat from their past life in Russia and were increasingly embracing Norwegian cultural practices. However, the significance of a 'Russian connection' became more apparent when my informants talked about the lives of their children. The transmission of Russian language, cultural knowledge and traditions became for most an important part of the relationship between mother and child, in which 'Russianness' was something positive, valuable and unique. The cultural connection established in this mother-child relationship set it apart from the father-child relationship and the cultural influences of the Norwegian context.

Through this act of positioning themselves and their mothering practices in relation to 'Russian' and 'Norwegian' approaches, these two cultural reference points took on different and contradictory values for my informants depending on the specific topic and situation that was being discussed. Their cross-cultural comparisons had not necessarily resulted in a clear idea of which mothering practices and cultural influences were optimal as part of their own lives and the lives of their children and some informants talked of this dilemma with a sense of uncertainty. It is important to give weight to these indications of internal conflict and contradictions that became evident in the accounts of certain informants and which showed that this act of positioning was a continual process. However, it became clear that all my informants were able to use this act of comparison to their advantage and to manoeuvre their way between these two frameworks of reference, showing both the complexity of their relationships with the Norwegian and Russian cultural context and also the agency exercised as part of constructing immigrant motherhood.

This process of constructing motherhood was arguably influenced by the apparently stable and independent situation of my informants within the family domain and the wider social context. My informants could be seen as largely belonging to the category of 'immigrant professionals', as discussed by Nesteruk and Marks.²³³ They were all middle-class, educated women at ease with navigating their new context and the fact that they were resourceful and competent individuals came across in the way in which they discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the Norwegian setting and the action that they had taken in order to realise their desired mothering role. Within the family context, there was arguably some negotiation taking place as to the balance between paid-work and child-care between mother and father. Most of my informants worked full-time and, in relation to gendered parenting practices, while

²³³ Nesteruk, O. and Marks, L. D., *op. cit.*

they had taken on the main responsibility for housework, there was clearly give-and-take in relation sharing child-care responsibilities and having their own leisure-time.

The parenting approaches of middle-class parents have been referred to as ‘childrearing strategies’,²³⁴ implying reflective and deliberate action; and amongst my informants their strategy of bringing up children according to certain culturally informed values brought to the fore an intersection between culture, gender and social class. The extent to which my informants saw the foreign context as affecting or being part of their choices of mothering practice reflected the more fundamental ways in which they viewed their roles as mothers. It became clear from discussion of the part that transmission of cultural knowledge played in the mother-child relationship that this practice was gendered and was part of a broader understanding of the mothering role, which was not necessarily influenced by context but by a particular socio-cultural understanding of mothering. Thus what can be seen as a middle-class mothering strategy meant that the role of a mother was not only to socialize her children but also to pass on knowledge as part of a teaching role.

Teaching in this sense could be understood as ‘showing, instructing, pointing out and guiding’²³⁵ in line with the notion of ‘mother-work’, as explored by Ruddick, which includes the fostering of emotional and intellectual development in children, and the teaching of social acceptability in children.²³⁶ Similarities found between teaching and mothering have pointed to the fact that while all mothers will teach values, behaviour and attitudes to their children, certain mothers will chose to impart more subject specific knowledge or skills.²³⁷ This last point is highly relevant in the case of my informants and in relation to the fact that the importance placed on imparting Russian cultural practices could be understood as not only part of enculturation but also part of a more defined and conscious ‘teacherly’ mothering behaviour. This construction of motherhood can be seen as a classed and gendered parenting style involving the passing on of cultural capital.²³⁸ The knowledge that these mothers had acquired from their own upbringing and education was seen by them as something that they could give of themselves to their children. In the case of my informants this included both ‘high-culture’ and the traditions and practices that were linked to their upbringing in Soviet Russia, on which they had based their understanding of their Russian cultural heritage. Thus we can see how the

²³⁴ Stefansen, K. and Farstad, G. R., op. cit.

²³⁵ Takseva, T., ‘Teaching and Mothering: Two Practices on the Same Continuum’, Conference paper for Mothering and Motherhood in the 21st Century: Research and Activism, February 18-19, 2010, Lisbon, Portugal, p. 8

²³⁶ Ruddick, S., *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1989

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7

²³⁸ Vincent, C. and Ball, S. J., op. cit.

influence of social class and involved mothering practice, which has been identified as a broader 'middle-class' approach to motherhood, translated into 'Russian mothering' in a Norwegian context.

Acculturation, transnationalism and agency

In the context of immigration, an understanding of motherhood as both constructed and shaped by contextual factors is particularly apt in that immigrant mothering involves the meeting of different culturally informed mothering practices and values within a particular socio-cultural context. Becoming mothers in Norway meant that my informants came into contact with child-care/educational and health institutions, and family policies and discourse. They were introduced to normative ideas of gendered parenting practice and cultural conceptions of parenthood in relation to childhood, communicated both directly and indirectly through interaction with the welfare state and wider Norwegian society. In my study it has been argued that my informants had largely constructed their motherhood in a way that combined elements of what they understood as childrearing practices and values both in the host country, and in their native country. This manifested as an agentive process of deliberation, negotiation and reconciliation. It was significant that while they had adopted a number of Norwegian mothering practices, they had also identified social and institutional structures that were recognised as hindering or limiting certain desired childrearing values and practices, or even being altogether absent. My informants had often taken deliberate action in order to realise the childhood that they wished for their children.

The majority of mothers were conscious of the influence that interaction with the Norwegian context was having on their children's lives and sense of cultural identity. Those who had foreign spouses discussed the situation of bringing up children in a multi-lingual family and the challenge of multiple cultural influences and those who were married to Norwegian men had a strong awareness of the inevitable influence of Norwegian language and culture on their children's lives. Recognising these external influences as part of the challenge of the immigrant context, my informants employed deliberate strategies for the transmission of Russian language and culture to their children and had put concerted effort into actively fostering a sense of Russian cultural identity. This came across as a salient part of their immigrant mothering role; a challenging and empowering aspect of their motherhood.

The approach to acculturation of Russian mothers in Norwegian society brings to the fore the negotiation of their mothering role within this socio-cultural context. However, acculturation and the process of constructing immigrant motherhood is not necessarily confined

to the boundaries of the host country. It was clear from my research findings that for a number of my informants, transnational ties such as the maintenance of cross-border social relationships played a part in the bringing up of their children in a foreign context. This was not only in relation to the cultural identity of mother and child and feelings of connectedness to Russia, but also in the mothering ideas and ideals of these mothers. Mothering practices in the Russian context were not only significant as a point of reference linked to the upbringing of my informants in Russia, but also as an ongoing point of reference, since these cultural practices and experiences were still to a great extent being fed into their construction of motherhood in Norway. In addition to first-hand experience of childrearing in Russia during their frequent visits, many of my informants were receiving advice from Russian family members, and had sisters and/or friends living in Russia who were having children at the same time. Regular communication and sharing of past and present mothering experiences was a part of these transnational relationships, hence, the simultaneous experiences of motherhood in two different socio-cultural contexts were often used as points of reference for mothers in my study. It could therefore be argued that the way in which both 'Russian' and 'Norwegian' cultural features were understood and related to by my research participants was influenced by their ongoing and changing relationship with their native country, through which they were continually re-defining and re-negotiating their mothering practice.

This can be taken even further. As pointed to in the previous chapter, what arose as a significant issue was the radical political, social and cultural changes that were taking place during the transition from the Soviet Union to contemporary Russian society. This shift from what was understood as the Russia of their childhood to the situation in contemporary Russia had created a sense of discontinuity for some of my informants in their perceptions of their native country. My research participants were not only adjusting to a Norwegian cultural context but re-adjusting to a changing Russian one. The way in which they talked about these changes suggested that their understanding of what it meant to be 'Russian' in their own lives and in the lives of their children was changing, as was their perceptions of what it meant to be a 'Russian mother'. This finding brings to the fore the fact that immigrant motherhood is a process of construction in which culture and cultural identity must be understood as dynamic, contingent and changeable. For each of my research participants, this was an ongoing process of defining and negotiating their own place between Norwegian and Russian ideas and ideals of motherhood.

Summary

My research has involved the study of a small group of middle-class, educated, Russian women bringing up children in Norway. My interviews with what might appear to be a largely homogenous group has provided a differentiated picture of immigrant motherhood. I have presented my findings in such a way that my informants' individual voices have been allowed to speak through extensive quotations, so that the diversity and nuances in their experiences have been given a place. While emerging studies have been showing the intergroup differences between groups of ethnic minority women in the Norwegian context, my study is adding to this research by giving weight to intragroup differences and presenting each of my research participants in both an in-depth and holistic way.

My most significant findings were enabled by a loosely structured interview style that allowed my study participants to steer the conversation and to speak at length. What came across through the interview process was that these mothers were as much concerned with discussing and defining what 'Russianness' meant in their own lives and the lives of their children, as recognising the influence of Norwegian cultural values on their mothering practice. This impacted on both their discussion of gendered parenting roles and the transmission of Russian culture to their children. Part of their agentic capacity was manifested in the way in which they chose to position themselves differently and selectively in relation to Norwegian and Russian cultural practices and to specific aspects of motherhood. Each mother was going through her own individual process of acculturation which involved exercising agency as part of the construction of immigrant motherhood.

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