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Overcoming loneliness: first-generation Slavic immigrants' experience with loneliness in the Inland Northwest

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OVERCOMING LONELINESS:

FIRST-GENERATION SLAVIC IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCE WITH LONELINESS
IN THE INLAND NORTHWEST

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By Charles C. Crook

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ABSTRACT

The plight of loneliness has caused devastation to many social and cultural groups' well-being. Scholars have analyzed and documented its adverse health such as suicide (Stravynski and Boyer 2001), Alzheimer's disease (Wilson et al. 2007), depression (Erzen and Çikrikci 2018), immune system complications (Hawkley and Cacioppo 2003), and cardiovascular complications (Hawley and Cacioppo 2003). Some compare its health impacts to smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Health Resources and Services Administration 2019), while others emphasize how loneliness compels people to internet addiction (Ayas and Horzum 2013) and alcohol abuse (Åkerlind and Hörnquist 1992). Among the most susceptible populations to loneliness are first-generation immigrants (Djundeva and Ellwardt 2010; Koelet and de Valk 2016), who often experience cultural alienation (Baolian 2006; Safipour et al. 2011). This thesis examined first-generation Slavic immigrants who have had a long history Inland Northwest. Social network theory and a phenomenological approach guided my question formation and qualitative data collection methods. I used participant observation, informal interviews, semi-structured interviews, and case studies to explore how loneliness was experienced. I specifically looked at sociometric variables like the context of reception, socioeconomic status, perceived discrimination, duration of stay, age, marital status, and gender in relation to social networks and loneliness. A unique identity was formed and became a central focus for this project. The significant findings showed how the context of departure, time of arrival, and ethnicity formed a Slavic-Christian identity and allowed its communities to flourish. Ultimately, Spokane's first-generation Slavic immigrants were not significantly lonely and overcame loneliness using their strong social networks and shared identity.

Future quantitative research and Russian language proficiency are needed to better understand first-generation Slavic immigrant loneliness among first-generation Slavic Christians and non-Christian populations.

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Introduction and Orientation of Study

1.1. Introduction

The experience of loneliness is a pervasive and pernicious issue among different social groups. While countless studies detail experiences of loneliness and its detrimental health effects, particularly among the elderly (Cacioppo et al. 2002; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Buchman et al. 2010; Luo et al. 2012; Perissinotto 2012), loneliness among immigrant communities has been under-investigated (Neto 2003; Iecovich et al. 2004). Previous studies have argued that immigrant loneliness was ubiquitous and heavily influenced by demographic factors such as age at migration, gender, length of residency, English proficiency, etc. (Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Wu and Penning 2003; Iecovich et al. 2004; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015; Neto 2019; Suh et al. 2019). This thesis research explores the central contributing factors to loneliness among first-generation Slavic immigrants residing in the Inland Northwest.

Immigrants are susceptible to loneliness. Though many immigrants are transnationally connected (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004; Kebede 2016), they often find themselves "uprooted" from their lives when moving to a new country (Handlin 1951). After relocation, immigrants' networks and identity become inconsistent and could result in feelings of loneliness (Treas and Mazumdar 2002). Immigrants are surrounded by an unfamiliar culture and forced to reconcile and navigate cultural differences and incongruencies to participate in society. Importantly, their social networks and social capital are frayed (see Menjivar 2000) due to their relocation. Transplanting oneself from

a familiar community into an unknown one fosters a new set of problems. Being a community member does not guarantee healthy or beneficial connections within a social network

Slavic immigrants in the United States often find themselves in a precarious situation. They are often mistaken for the majority population, despite being culturally distinct. A lack of awareness from the majority population can then challenge their identities and create feelings of loneliness. Loneliness arises from a perceived new population's recognition and appreciation for immigrants' distinct cultural differences. Studies on Arab immigrants and Asian international students have demonstrated how cultural and ethnic ambiguities cause adverse effects because of a perceived lack of recognition and interest in cultural and ethnic identities (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012; Suh et al. 2019).

Although Slavic immigrants in other countries have had a positive experience building their new communities and identities (Neto 2019), narratives in the United States surrounding Eastern Europeans can be unsettling for newcomers. Eastern Europeans are commonly portrayed in the entertainment industry as villains, and recent political narratives about Russian and Ukrainian political meddling have caused a sense of anxiety among the American public (Barnes 2020). When the host country and its population are skeptical of the intentions of the new immigrants, it can lead to an unwelcoming experience. These hostile political and cultural environments could affect how welcomed, and accepted Slavic immigrants feel within the United States. Such a context may also contribute to an overall sense of isolation and loneliness (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015) through feelings of unbelonging.

1.2. Area of Study

This research was conducted in Spokane, Washington. Spokane was located in the North-Eastern corner of Washington State and considered a part of the Inland Northwest. Spokane was Washington's second-largest city and had a population of approximately 219,190 people (City of Spokane n.d.). Spokane rested in a valley and had the Spokane River that ran directly through the city. In the area, residents and visitors could engage in outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing, white water rafting, skiing, snowboarding, hunting, and some of the largest road racing, three-on-three baseball, and basketball tournaments in the United States (City of Spokane n.d.). It was also home to Fairchild Air Force Base and ranked number four in the nation for healthcare-emphasized employment (City of Spokane n.d.).

At first glance, Spokane was a city with visibly deep-rooted religious ties. Churches with Catholic and Protestant architecture dotted the Spokane landscape and nearly rose to the city's skyline. Gonzaga University sat at the center of Spokane and was a private Catholic institution that added a beautiful Christian-inspired architectural district to the area. Cathedrals were the primary staple of Spokane, but other religious institutions were also visible. Temples, mosques, synagogues, orthodox churches, and other contemporary Christian churches were present throughout the cityscape and surrounding areas.

Rundown industrial buildings scattered the downtown's outskirts, and there were many vagrants. Many neighborhoods were derelict, and the process of gentrification was seemingly rampant. The Spokane River and downtown areas emphasized this clearly with communities like Kendell Yards, which were comparable to a microcity within a city

meant for the upper-middle class. Long rows of new shops lined the streets in one area while simultaneously sitting parallel to other unkempt and streets and neighborhoods. These areas created a juxtaposition within the city where one moment, one might feel they were in a suburban catalog, and the next feel as if they were touring the ruined factory districts of the rustbelt.

While Spokane was Washington's second-largest city, critics have noted its lack of diversity (World Population Review n.d.). According to the 2010 census, Spokane's racial diversity was as follows: 85.1% White alone, 2.2% Black or African American alone, 1.9% American Indian or Alaskan Native alone, 2.6% Asian alone, 0.8% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander alone, 5.9% Two or More Races, 6.5% Hispanic or Latino, and 81.4% White alone, not Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). In 2015-2019, approximately 5.6% of Spokane's total population were foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). Though the numbers may not indicate it, diversity could be seen when walking the Spokane streets. Korean, Vietnamese, Indian, African, European, and Spanish community buildings could be identified throughout the city. Some residential ethnic enclaves could also be found.

Spokane was also partially a Native American reservation and was home to multiple Native American tribes. Tribes like the Coeur d'Alene, Colville, Kalispel, Kootenai, and Spokane resided within the area (Upper Columbia United Tribes 2021). In the city, many institutions sought to preserve the local indigenous culture. The Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture aimed to maintain the surrounding areas' indigenous culture by showcasing artifacts to locals. Alongside this, The Salish School of Spokane attempted to revive the Salish language through immersion schooling. Native American

artwork and symbolism were present throughout the city, and recognition of the tribes and their history had increased in places like surrounding universities.

The group that was of particular interest in this research was Spokane's first-generation Slavic immigrant population. There were various Eastern European immigrants in Spokane that came from different countries. However, the most common phrase I have heard them referred to as by each other was "Slavs." Therefore the subsection of Eastern European immigrants called Slavic immigrants was examined. Of the Slavic immigrant population, Russians and Ukrainians were among the fastest-growing immigrant communities in Spokane (World Population Review n.d.) They were spread throughout the city and were not limited to a distinct area. In 2000, they made up approximately 2% of Spokane's population (World Population Review n.d.), with 4,900 people of Russian or Ukrainian descent (Kyiv Post 2002), and their numbers continued to grow. Unlike many other immigrants in the area, Slavic immigrants blend in well with Spokane's majority population. As they appeared ethnically similar, they were often easily overlooked by residents and visitors. If one looked hard enough, they would see many Slavic businesses and community services intermixed with the standard city commercial buildings. Market, restaurants, law firms, banks, translation services, and churches were examples of some that one may find.

There were no specific Slavic ethnic enclaves that were apparent in the area. Instead, Slavic immigrants had integrated and dispersed throughout the local communities and cityscape. Their ethnic and cultural spread made for an interesting dynamic when studying their social networks because they were much less physically closed off and secluded. I expected that this would cause varying degrees of effects.

Looking at Spokane as a whole, the different class-based areas and the Slavic population's distribution created environments that could be interpreted as good or bad depending on the individual's demographic characteristics. I sought out individuals from different areas and gathered data to understand how Spokane's dynamic was viewed.

1.3. Methodology

Anthropologists have acknowledged the use of social network analysis in ethnography (Mitchell 1974). In the past, structural-functionalist approaches were implemented to understand small-scale societies (Mitchell 1974). However, anthropologists recognized were insufficient given the complexities of modern societies (Mitchell 1974). The concept of social networks closely relates to elements of social capital theory. Lin (1999) captured the relationship between social capital and networks by detailing how embedded network resources were used to invoke expressive and instrumental actions from a social network. Instrumental actions acquired new resources while expressive actions maintained existing resources (Lin 1999). Expressive actions of social capital were related to loneliness because feelings of loneliness were influenced by emotional support. Emotional support between network members maintained mental stressors like loneliness. Such actions would be categorized as expressive (Lin 1999) because the intended effect was the maintenance of one's emotional well-being, and support was a resource. The social capital theory has been used by many scholars who studied immigrant well-being (Fuglerud and Engebrigtsen 2006; Hellermann 2006; Tegegne and Glanville 2018; Luo et al. 2018). Lin (1999) recognized the importance of social capital in this relationship but argued that social capital depended on social networks.

Social network analysis merged theory with methodology (Wedel et al. 2005) and digested relationships between immigrants, social structures, resettlement, and loneliness. This theory and methodology were then translatable to larger subsets of Spokane's first-generation Slavic community. Wedel et al. (2005) argued, "an ethnographer can examine relationships between individuals, groups, and organizations and the changing, overlapping, and multiple roles that actors within them may play." Scholars have used social network approaches to understand the effects of relationships in immigrant communities (Kim 1999; Iecovich et al. 2004; de Miguel Luken and Tranmer 2010; Koelet and de Valk 2016; Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019) and gave precedent to its uses in this research.

Liu et al. (2017) described multiple features of social networks effects. Of those mentioned, network cohesion and structural equivalence were relevant to this thesis. Social cohesion was characterized as a measure of interconnectedness that influenced an actor's personal network (Liu et al. 2017). Structural equivalence advocated how multiple members of a shared network with similar social positions and qualities received similar experiences and knowledge from the network (Liu et al. 2017). Participants in this study had experienced similar pre and post-migration conditions. Social network theory and analysis were then well suited for delving into the phenomenon of loneliness as it was derived from incongruent social network expectations and interactions between individuals and groups (Yang and Victor 2011). It also evaluated how focused local interactions were interconnected with higher-magnitude community interactions (Wedel et al. 2005). Participants often resided in different regions of Spokane and its metropolitan areas. A social network analysis framework recognized the connections of

individuals via social networks (Wedel et al. 2005) and made qualitative experiences relatable to each other.

This research also took a phenomenological approach to understand the issue of loneliness. A phenomenological approach recognized that "our existence as humans is temporally structured in such a way that our experience is always retained in a present moment that is feeding forward to anticipate future horizons of experiences" (Desjarlias 2011). This approach demonstrated how individuals within the Slavic population understood and interpreted loneliness through their subjective experiences and perceptions. In this thesis, the first-generation Slavic immigrant community's natural attitude about loneliness was pursued. Many anthropologists had used this approach to study subject-centered topics and social life (Desjarlais and Throop 2011), and it appeared to be the best-suited approach for this project.

The methods used to answer my research questions were participant observation, informal interviews, semi-structured interviews, and case studies. Initially, participant observation and informal interviews were the primary methods of data collection. Locations and participants were recruited by searching the internet, talking to community members, and mutual contact snowball sampling. Once a more pertinent questionnaire based on preliminary data collection had been developed, semi-structured interviews were administered to collect more complete data. Applying concepts presented in social network and social capital theories, I interpreted the results and analyzed how first-generation Slavic immigrants experienced loneliness.

1.3.1. Research Questions

These questions explored and explained how Spokane's Slavic communities utilized their social networks and how they affected feelings of loneliness:

1. How was loneliness experienced within the first-generation Slavic immigrant community in the Inland Northwest, given their relative ethnic invisibility?

2. How did incongruencies between pre and post-immigration identities contribute to feelings of loneliness?

3. How did internal differences within the population such as age, duration of stay, gender, and religion contribute to feelings of loneliness?

4. What sociocultural practices, goods, and structures did first-generation Slavic immigrants utilize to manage and overcome loneliness?

1.3.2. Participant Observation

Participant observation allowed researchers to view culture in its natural habitat (Bernard 2011). I performed observations in publicly accessible areas that acted as community points of interest for Slavic immigrants. I identified a few places to be relevant, such as Kiev Market, Cedar Coffee, and Calvary Spokane Church. I also gathered more information on other suitable sites not listed online, including online communities and residential homes. During observation, field notes were taken on interactions, cultural materials, and practices. Informal interviews were conducted in the field to further elaborate on the observed data. Analysis revealed how different demographic factors, practices, and goods affect loneliness (R-3 and R-4).

1.3.3. Interviews and Case Studies

Twelve participants were recruited for semi-structured interviews. Recruits came from mutual contacts, participant observation sites, and virtual communities found on http//:www.reddit.com's Spokane subreddit. Ethnographic question types influenced by James P. Spradley's *The Ethnographic Interview* were asked to answer my research questions (see Spradley 1979). The forms of the questions asked were descriptive, structural, and contrasting (Spradley 1979). Descriptive questions asked participants to describe their scenarios in detail. Structural questions asked them to elaborate and map out their social structures and practices as well as their functions. Contrasting questions were asked to clarify details and expand understanding (Spradley 1979). Questions were asked about the participants' experiences of immigrating to the United States, how their social status had changed, and what they did to reconcile feelings of loneliness (R-1, R-2, R-4). Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and stored on private, password-protected devices. Responses were analyzed to see how networks were used to mediate loneliness. The questions asked were as follows in Figure 1. Participants who provided more information were used as case studies. Some were more descriptive than others. Interviews with such informants often elaborated more on each of their talking points and explored ideas that arose in conversation.

```
                Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

Part-1: Demographic Info.

   a. Age/ sex / marital status /education / religion

Part-2: Arrival/Attraction

   a. When did you come to Spokane?
   b. Have you lived anywhere else?
   c. How did you decide to come to Spokane?

Part-3: Questions about Home?

   a. What did you do for a living in [country]?
   b. What do you miss about [country]?
   c. Were you part of any groups?
   d. Do you keep in touch with friends and families in
      [country]?

Part-4: Questions about the US

   a. What do you do for a living here?
   b. What are your frustrations/challenges?
   c. Do you experience loneliness?
   d. What do you do when you want to socialize?
   e. Are you part of the [ethnicity] social/cultural life here?

 Part-5: Overall

   a. What do you like about the US?
   b. Do you feel like you are becoming more American as you stay
      here?
   c. Do you feel more loneliness in Spokane or [country]?
      Please explain.
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Figure 1: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

I chose to ask these questions because they helped guide the conversation towards topics that answered my research questions. In part one, the demographic information helped me gain general insight into which types of people were lonely and if a trend existed between demographics and loneliness (R-1, R-3). Part two helped me understand how and why immigrants chose to come to the United States and what country they were initially from (R-1, R-2, R-3). The questions in part three provided information on the identities and socioeconomic statuses of first-generation Slavic immigrants. They also showed if participants resonated with any particular social group back in their home country (R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4). In part four, the questions helped me understand where immigrants went to socialize, what they did, and who was present in their social circles. These questions helped me further comprehend identities and their communities (R-1, R-4). Finally, in part five, these questions demonstrated how accepted participants felt and whether or not they felt lonely (R-1).

As loneliness could be a personal and uncomfortable topic, the order of these questions casually eased participants into sharing their experiences. While the other questions did not address loneliness directly, I hoped that responses would cover topics indicating whether participants were lonely without explicitly stating it. Because rapport was hard to gain given COVID-19 circumstances, I felt these questions were the best way to approach my research questions, given my limited experience and knowledge of the language and specific cultural talking points.

1.4. Location of the Study

This research was primarily conducted at Calvary Spokane, located in the northern part of Spokane, Washington. Calvary Spokane was a non-denominational

Christian church that had many Russia speaking members of its congregation. While it was not specifically a Russian church, it had drawn many Slavic immigrants to it through its many partnerships, outreach programs, and services. One of the main draws to Calvary Spokane was its Russian translation services. Through church fundraising, Calvary Spokane had translated various religious texts and mobile apps into Russian. The church also provided translated church sermons.

In the church, my key informant helped me meet and befriend the majority of individuals participating in this research. As a sample, it was limited, but it had made for a great place to gain entry into the broader Slavic immigrant community. Members seemed to attend church consistently and partake in many activities, such as breakfast in the church Family Center after a 9:00 AM service. It looked like a community hub for socialization and was used frequently to connect and access others.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not easy to participate in community observation outside of this location. Usually, interviews were conducted in public places outside of the church environment. Restaurants and coffee shops, if open, were the preferred places to meet. Once, I was invited to a family's home for a group interview, but other participants did not offer that. Being a non-denominational Christian myself, the church has served as a great place to establish some form of solidarity that helped me connect and relate to participants.

1.5. Choosing a Population

In our anthropology department, I had heard that there was a large population of Eastern European immigrants in the area. Their community was interesting to me because I had never noticed, despite them having a presence. So, I did some further background research and discovered that there were many Eastern Europeans in Spokane. I then designed a project to examine loneliness in first-generation Slavic immigrants. Around this time, I was also attending a church in downtown Spokane during the weekdays. I then began going to weeknight services for young adults. Here, I met who would later become my key informants for the Slavic community, Jamie.

1.6. Connecting with the Community

After performing more background research on loneliness in immigrant communities and learning about Spokane's Slavic population, COVID-19 struck. Suddenly, I was no longer able to go and search for people in person. Businesses were closed, and so too were churches. If I were to go and talk to people, I must have remained six feet away from them and adorned a facemask, which may have damaged my rapport building. My initial plan was to go to Cedar Coffee, a Ukrainian-owned coffee shop in Spokane, and to the various Kiev Markets. Once businesses began reopening, I decided to go out and talk to some of the employees at selected stores. I started by going to Cedar Coffee.

I had first heard about Cedar Coffee from an article in a local newspaper called *The Spokesman-Review*'s website. There, they told how the coffee shop was owned by a Ukrainian couple (Janovich 2017). The location of Cedar Coffee was near the gentrified

area of Kendal Yards. It was within walking distance of a small and high-end community commercial and residential walkway. The shop could be divided into three main areas. The first was the front lobby, which consisted of five chairs and various plants, artwork, and a restroom. The second was the workstation where the barista resided and performed his work duties. The final area was a back room that seemed to serve as an overflow area or an area for those looking to enjoy their beverages in a more secluded place.

The aroma of coffee filled the shop, as well as the sounds of coffee equipment clanking and steaming. Classical jazz-like music was playing, and the atmosphere was very calm and relaxing. Modern equipment and art were visible. It was exquisite and classy and felt like a great studying and business environment. It was hard to discern how culturally influenced the presentation of the shop was. They had various options of coffee and tea on the menu, but more notably, spiced beverages. A lot of customers were present, despite the pandemic environment.

The barista working there was young, and his accent sounded Slavic. I waited around for a while and did not notice anything out of the ordinary about the place. Customers were just as random as one might expect going to a coffee shop, and I saw no indication that it was a hub for other Slavic immigrants to gather. Nevertheless, I decided to come back another day to see if I could talk with the barista more.

When I came back, I once again ordered coffee and sat at a table reading a book. I observed what types of people came in and if the Ukrainian-owned business attracted other Slavic immigrants. Again, it seemed like there was no trend in customers, and it was locals or regular customers that sounded American. Near the end of my time, I began talking with the barista.

The barista told me that his parents owned the shop, and he worked there a lot, especially during the summer. He said that there was an office upstairs, and he was there often. I asked him if I could come again and ask questions regarding his family's story, and he agreed. He said that at first, it was difficult for his family to open the shop. The ownership transferred a lot, and the process was messy. Eventually, his family received ownership. He said that if I talked to his father, he might have some trouble because his English was not the best, but that he liked answering questions. I then departed.

When I came back, there were not many customers. I asked the barista more general questions about his experiences. It was very casual. I began by asking how long the coffee shop had been open. The barista recalled how his family had moved there in 2015, and the coffee shop had been open for a year in April. However, it had been renovated for a year prior to opening. He explained that his family had moved to Spokane because his grandmother moved there in the 1980s and because there was a massive Russian community. I asked where he was born, and he said it was near a border town in Russia. However, he moved towards the center of Russian later in life. While his immediate family moved to the United States, his grandparents still lived in Russia.

The barista continued telling stories about Russia. He described how they have colossal stone art pieces the sizes of buildings and that food there was cheap. He also discussed how they used fresh meats and ingredients and that they were becoming modernized fast. I kept asking follow-up questions, and he told me stories of how a man who had cancer drank a cup of vodka with grain every day, and they thought that it cured him, but he ended up walking out into the cold and dying. He also said that when he was younger, he had a cold, and his grandmother gave him a medicine made with bear fat

which helped treat him. I asked him if he missed Russia, and he said that he would like to go back and visit his grandmother's town and where he lived. The town, he said, had 33,000 people. There, he knew many of the streets, and it was familiar. But he did not elaborate further. We then both talked about being a student in college, and I left again, hoping to come back, and speak with his father.

When I returned again, I saw his father working, but this time the store was bustling. After waiting there for some time, there was a brief pause in business. I then asked the father a few questions that were similar to the ones I asked his son. The father said that he was from Ukraine but here liked it in Spokane. I asked him if he missed it there. To my surprise, he said that he would go back and say "hi," but that was all. It seemed like he was enjoying his life in Spokane. Perhaps his position as a store owner and family kept him fulfilled. It did not seem that he or his son was lonely and were well integrated.

During my time observing at the coffee shop, one thing that caught my attention was that the father was Ukrainian, lived in Russia, and came to Spokane because of the Russian community. This conflation was peculiar to me because of the ongoing conflicts between Russia and Ukraine. I had read a news article describing how Ukrainian immigrants paid attention to the conflict from afar (Shors 2004). Therefore, I suspected that there would be a separation between the Ukrainian and Russian identities. This experience would be the first time I experienced identity incongruency but not the last. As no signs of loneliness were apparent, and I did not see other Slavs coming in or interacting with the employees in their native tongue, I decided to observe in other locations.

The next locations that I visited were the various Kiev Markets in Spokane. In total, there were three markets. One in the north, one in the central, and one in the eastern part of Spokane. Each market was similar and filled with various cultural goods ranging from foodstuffs to garments. Inside, all three stores had similar environments and atmospheres. They were all quiet. The only sounds heard were the employees restocking goods, checking customers out, or Russian-speaking individuals conversing softly among themselves in the aisles. The stores were brightly lit, and the shelves were fully stocked. Each was a mini grocery store with all the essentials like meats, fresh produce, teas, coffees, dairy, frozen goods, candies, snacks, bakery goods, cultural garments, and other goods. It appeared like it was a one-stop-shop catered towards Slavic immigrants. Employees were talkative if speaking in Russian but were not too interested in conversing with me in English. Many did not seem too proficient at English.

The northern store was the largest and had a deli section with far more variety than the other two. It was filled with many types of meat and sausages and was reminiscent of a butcher's shop. Upon my second time going there and purchasing some tea, bread, and meat, I asked a younger English-speaking employee if she knew any Slavic immigrants who would be interested in a conversation. She thought about it, but she could not think of anyone. She said that I could try my luck talking with random customers in the store. With the facemask and social distancing mandates still in order, I did not see how this would be a feasible approach without a key informant or Russian language proficiency.

I went to the other two locations multiple times. There I would ask the employees basic questions or if they would be interested in talking about their experiences. All of

them declined, and some told me to try another store. They seemed uncomfortable conversing with me, and I did not want to pressure anyone for information. Given the pandemic circumstances as well, I was not surprised by attitudes. Discouraged, I stopped going to Kiev and decided to create a new strategy.

I had asked some more friends and associates if they knew any Slavic immigrants. One suggested going to a Russian church, but at this time, I did not feel that it was safe to do so, given the state of the pandemic. I also did not know that the local Russian churches catered to all Slavic immigrants in the area. Those who said that they would reach out to people they knew never responded.

In a more desperate attempt to find participants, I made a post to https://www.reddit.com/r/Spokane/, asking if there were any immigrants in the area that I could interview. To my surprise, one individual sent me a message and offered to meet at a coffee shop. This meeting took place at a later date.

While also searching for new leads into the community, I downloaded a messaging app to chat with one of my long-distance friends. Shortly after setting up my account, a friend called Jamie had sent me a message using this app. It had been a while since we had last talked, and we caught up. Jamie was very outgoing and social. I figured that I would try my odds by asking him if he knew anyone that would be willing to connect with me. He replied, saying that he knew many Slavs in the area and could help me set up interviews with them. Delighted, I accepted. From this point on, Jamie would be my key informant.

Though Jamie was not Slavic himself, he attended a church where many Slavic immigrants also went. The church was called Calvary Spokane and was a Protestant Christian church that offered various services for Slavic immigrants. Many Slavic immigrants could be seen there, and Jamie said it would be an excellent place to meet people. Despite it not being a church that was oriented explicitly towards Slavic immigrants, many could speak English well and were friendly. I then began regularly attending services as best I could.

Upon arrival, Calvary Spokane appeared to have been built in a larger strip mall that had once been a grocery store prior to its new occupants. The church was frequently full of visitors, and the atmosphere was amicable and welcoming. Before and after the service, depending on which one was attended, guests could enjoy breakfast and coffee for a heavily reduced cost, with many places to sit and gather with their families and friends.

During service, four songs were played at the start to set the tone for the rest of the morning. Once worship had concluded, the morning announcements took place, and recognition was given to various outreach programs. Occasionally, children would be brought in to sing songs or perform other activities. After such events, the pastor would begin his service. It usually lasted a little over an hour. Once the sermon was finished, Communion was taken, and two final songs marked the end of the service.

The church sermons were conservative in nature. Some of the other churches that I had visited in the surrounding area had a much more liberal approach to their doctrines and messages. However, Calvary Spokane was noticeably different. They had no

reservations about discussing the more complicated, less lighthearted topics of the Bible and were unafraid to critique current political actions, narratives, and agendas.

My first time visiting this church was during a lesson of Revelations, a book of the Bible infamous for its bleak outlook and dark predictions for the world following the return of Jesus Christ. While this may have scared off new members who were more adjusted to other approaches to ministry and outreach, Calvary Spokane did not hold back. Their style was well-received in their community. From my experience talking with congregation members, it seemed they were especially appreciative of the pastor's candor sermon. Perhaps this was why many Slavic immigrants and families gravitate to this non-tradition Russian church. There was a certain level of directness about the message, which aligned well with their cultures' tendency to be direct, no matter the message.

Members seemed to attend consistently and partake in many activities that the church facilitated. Eating breakfast after the first sermon, Bible studies, social events, and volunteering opportunities were common. Beyond that, there were more independent activities arranged and handled by church staff and congregation members. This church was where I would establish contact with most participants. It was also where most interviews commenced.

1.7. Limitations

Limitations were inevitable in any project and were not limited to this one. While steps had been made to reduce the amount of possible limiting factors, the specific circumstance surrounding this research's facilitation had made this project increasingly challenging to execute. This project's limitations could be broken into five sections,

which consist of COVID-19, data collection, sampling, data analysis, and language

barriers. Each has played a unique role in my ability to gather data and find a diverse

representation of Spokane's first-generation Slavic community.

1.7.1. COVID-19

COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus, was a virus transmitted through liquid

aerosols derived from contagious individuals and devastated the world since the spring of

2020. The virus's symptoms included but were not limited to fever, coughing, sore throat,

fatigue, loss of senses, and more (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2021).

Strict measures were implemented to combat the virus's ease of transmission within the

United States and, more specifically, Washington State. The policies enacted consisted of

active social distancing of six feet minimum, mandatory face mask adornment, changes

in business practices, closure of religious institutions and other community resources,

remote educational learning, and much more. These changes caused a shift in American

culture, leading to paranoia, division, and opposition.

As expected of American politics, the coronavirus had become highly politicized.

The two ends of the American political spectrum were at constant odds and have

concocted false narratives about the pandemic's nature. In an effort to seek out the truth,

both sides had chosen to discount the others' "facts" and seemingly decided to follow the

guidelines and behaviors set by their party figureheads and scientistic figures. This

partisanship of information and precautions had caused great paranoia.

On the one hand, fearmongering and emotionally charged rhetoric incapacitated

the public by creating a narrative akin to the boogieman. The coronavirus was seen as

ever omnipotent and permeating all realms of society. On the other hand, the coronavirus was treated like the common cold rebranded and taken far too apathetically. This attitude had led to complete avoidance of necessary safety precautions, increased transmission rates, and distrust in non-partisan information about the virus. It had fostered an environment ripe for transmission. Depending on an individual's ideology, access could either be unfeasible or too dangerously feasible for comfort.

This toxic and politically charged environment had created copious amounts of division between the two-party's members and could be seen in public. The Spokane streets were filled with those wearing masks and those who did not. Businesses had strict measures where their employees must wear masks and could not serve those who did not. Yet, there were many where no masks were worn. This inconstancy in guideline compliance created tension between individuals and cultivated a judgmental and sometimes hostile environment. Gathering information in this environment had proved to be exceptionally difficult as participants' willingness to share information with me was highly dependent on how seriously they were treating the threat of the pandemic and what they perceived my opinion of it to be. Rapport was then hard to build and participants challenging to find.

1.7.2. Data Collection

Typically, in ethnography, the accumulation of rapport was a fundamental part of the research process. Rapport was hard to earn in this environment. Mandates had drastically reduced the potential for connection. I opted to largely omit the rapport gathering process and move straight from observation to questioning.

Participant observation had also been problematic during these times. Many placed immigrants might have gone were closed. Their social circles had to operate irregularly. Areas to observe had then become seldom. During this project, I would be relegated to observing public places where it is hard to see immigrant interactions unless they came in for business or audibly spoke Russian or other Slavic languages. This barrier limited who I observed because the employees of the business would be the primary focus. As a result, observation data was severely limited.

The pandemic circumstances had also affected interviews. It was common for interviews to occur face-to-face, as this helped with connecting on a human level and created a more trusting environment. However, all in-person interviews would incorporate masks due to coronavirus. Other interviews would likely take place on the phone or over a video call. This new format may have potentially caused data to be affected due to the unusual circumstance surrounding socialization. In tandem with the fact that interviews may already be uncomfortable for some participants, this changed environment may have caused more skewed data.

1.7.3. Sampling Restrictions

Finding a large and diverse enough sample size had been a significant obstacle in this research process. It was challenging to find people to interview within the communities I had been in, especially considering the COVID-19 restrictions. Due to the nature of the pandemic, social encounters have been seldom. This effect had caused my snowball sampling tactics not to gain speed as quickly as I had hoped. Throughout this process, I felt that the key to reaching community members who did not conform to the expectations of the dominant group was impossible, given the circumstances. Had I had

more time and the restrictions not been in place, I may have been able to find those who were a part of the community but were less engaged than those who subscribed to the social norms.

1.7.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis process was also a limiting factor in the project due to my inability to analyze results statistically. As I chose to use a qualitative phenomenological approach, this project did not include quantitative data analysis. Due to the pandemic, participants may be less likely to go into depth with their interviews. Perhaps because of paranoia surrounding time spent with an unfamiliar person or a lack of trust about specific topics. Participants' seemed aligned on many of the topics discussed. Their consensus led me to believe that my sample size was not large enough or obstacles were preventing me from accessing people with divergent experiences. I knew that people with differing views existed because of conversations and interviews had with the participants, but they seemed inaccessible.

1.7.5. Language Barriers

Excluding the other liming factors, the language barrier had been the most tricky hurdle. Before beginning this project, I was not familiar with anyone who could speak Russian or any other Slavic language. My lack of language proficiency made going to place like Kiev Market, where many of the workers predominantly spoke Russian, fruitless. Shared language was also a way to gain trust more quickly, and I did not always have it. My unfamiliarity with the language and my being an interviewer seemed to cause skepticism for participants and would-be participants. Many did not trust me and had a

difficult time communicating. These conditions led to many declined interviews and conversations. Given the history of the Soviet Union and political and religious persecution, it is no wonder an individual studying the Russian community for seemingly no reason would be someone to avoid. Had I been able to speak Russian, perhaps I could have won trust over easier. Participants I interviewed were often proficient with English to a degree, which was known to help immigrants adjust better to their new locations (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015).

1.8. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explained the issue of loneliness and how first-generation immigrants are especially vulnerable to it. I then described how this research was conducted in Spokane, Washington. Following this, my methodology and research questions were given to provide more context to this project. Social network theory and a phenomenological approach were used to design queries and interpret data. As this project was more qualitative in nature, my methods consisted of participant observation, interviews, and case studies. To conclude this chapter, I described the study's limitations.

Chapter Two

Literature Review: Loneliness, Migration, Social Networks, and Social Capital

2.1. Introduction

This chapter covers existing literature that helped shape my methodology and understanding of how loneliness manifests and functions. First, I explore literature on loneliness and loneliness among immigrant populations. Second, I examine the literature on the relationship between social networks and social capital in terms of overcoming loneliness. Third, I investigate the role of identity and loneliness. Lastly, the chapter refers to other studies of similar natures on Slavic communities and discusses their results.

2.2. Loneliness: Definition and Typology

Loneliness was pervasive in the world and predominantly based on individuals' perceptions (Tiwari 2019; Jeste et al. 2020). It was also shaped by one's cultural background that governed their perceptions (Rokach 1998) and created a unique manifestation of loneliness. Literature suggested that loneliness was derived from inadequate social relationships and was the primary indicator of well-being (Jeste et al. 2020). More specially, loneliness resulted from the gap between expectations and reality (Yang and Victor 2011). In general, loneliness could be defined as an unpleasant feeling that stemmed from one's social networks failing to meet qualitative or quantitative expectations (de Jong Giervald 1987; Peplau and Perlman 1982; Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004; ten Kate et al. 2020). While the experience of loneliness was individually oriented,

it could be broken into two subsections called emotional and social loneliness (Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019; ten Kate et al. 2020).

Emotional loneliness is qualitative in nature and concerns the depth of relationships an individual possesses. When a person participates in social relationships that fail to meet a level of expected intimacy, emotional loneliness can develop (Yang and Victor 2011). Though individuals may have many people surrounding them in their immediate social networks, they may still perceive themselves as lonely if they cannot discuss personal and meaningful affairs with others. Elements that help offset this experience are having close friends and family to confide in (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015; ten Kate et al. 2019) as well as increasing one's efforts to socialize (Ahmad et al. 2005).

What made emotional loneliness of particular interest was its personal and group dynamic. During migration, emotional loneliness could become a pressing issue because immigrants become uprooted from their social networks during the migration process (Handlin 1951; Grundy 2017). Their uprooting restricts access to close friends, family, and confidants. After relocation, immigrants are also less likely to trust others which hinders the development of confidants and increases feelings of isolation (Kirova 2001).

Expectations of relationships varied highly and were dependent on many factors. Cultural norms, gender roles, and socioeconomic status were just a few possible variables that could have affected expectations of relationships and when they would be considered unsatisfactory (Sharf 2005; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015; Tiwari 2019; ten Kate et al. 2020). Culture was a significant influencer in this process; hence, it was imperative to understand how it shaped individuals' perceptions of loneliness and its causality. In a

study conducted by Yang and Victor (2011), they tested loneliness across various cultural groups in Europe. One tested group contained participants from Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine (Yang and Victor 2011). In this group, Yang and Victor found that loneliness was more prevalent than in groups composed of people from other cultural groups across Europe (Yang and Victor 2011).

Social loneliness was the quantitative side of loneliness and was characterized by the frequency and number of social relationships and activities. While network members may have had some good and meaningfully intimate relationships, social loneliness could still arise if there were expectations of more connections (ten Kate et al. 2020). Not all friends or family could satisfy both emotional and social needs. A balanced mix was needed to prevent feelings of loneliness from manifesting in either domain (Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019). The primary factor that helped reduce the social element was having multiple friends and family members willing to participate in activities with lonely individuals (ten Kate et al. 2020). A study conducted on Polish immigrants in the Netherlands found that having family members present yielded better psychological well-being (Grundy et al. 2019). After relocation, immigrants were susceptible to social loneliness because migration required them to make new friends and connections (Djundeva and Ellwardt 2010). Immigrants were especially vulnerable before new relationships had formed (Koelet and de Valk 2016) because they did not always have people to socialize with or confidants.

2.3. Loneliness and Health

Loneliness could negatively impact many aspects of peoples' lives, including physical, mental, and social health. Some known health effects of loneliness consisted of

cardiovascular complications, immune system issues, eating disturbances, metabolic dysregulation, reduced mental health, impaired cognition, psychological distress, depression, increased morbidity, increased suicidal tendencies, and even mortality (Kim 1999; Adam et al. 2010; Victor et al. 2012; Wu and Penning 2015; Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019; Tiwari 2019). In addition, loneliness also reduced the motivation to become physically active and further exacerbated the former health effects (Peplau and Perlman 1979). Due to loneliness being highly subjective and grounded in personal experience, the scale and scope of affected individuals' symptoms varied.

For immigrants, the migration process contributed to multiple psychological stressors like depression and paranoia surrounding one's health because of their lack of social support systems (Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004; Ahmad et al. 2005). Negative thoughts morphed into more harmful forms without the necessary social support to mediate such concerns. Such stressors then contributed to overall feelings of psychological distress among immigrants (Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004). Older immigrants were especially vulnerable to loneliness (Wu and Penning 2015) because they had a more challenging time adapting and integrating into new countries. A lack of language proficiency and immigrant status led to exclusion from social activity and intensified the harmful effects of loneliness in older immigrant populations (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015).

One particularly harmful effect of loneliness was that it could initiate a negative feedback loop within an individual's life. When loneliness was experienced, some found the will to resist it and took action to remedy their feelings (Peplau and Perlman 1979). These individuals reflected externally and took the necessary steps to participate in a

meaningful social exchange with someone close. While they may offset the social impacts of loneliness, their experience could still come at a cost. As the will to socialize increased, desires to perform other activities decreased (Peplau and Perlman 1979). This response can be explained by the oscillating emotional state that loneliness causes, where motivation is high sometimes and low at other times (Peplau and Perlman 1979).

Unlike the individuals described above, others lose willpower upon experiencing loneliness (Peplau and Perlman 1979). Such individuals may have reflected introspectively and labeled themselves the primary culprit responsible for their loneliness. Their absence of willpower and reflection could have led to the creation of a destructive self-image and began a negative feedback loop of loneliness.

A higher state of self-awareness and vigilance were typically accompanied by loneliness (Peplau and Perlman 1979) and produced an awkward social dynamic. During social interactions, lonely people displayed their need for meaningful social interaction and became hyper-focused on deriving meaning from any identifiable social cues (Weiss 1973). Often, identified social cues had their implications amplified, usually to the detriment of the interpreter. Some lonely people became exceptionally aware of their social interactions and interpreted negative social cues as more antagonistic than perhaps they were intended by the other party (Weiss 1973). Likewise, some positive social cues were also falsely interpreted. Misinterpretation caused some lonely people to feel as if the person they were interacting with liked them more than they did in actuality (Weiss 1973). Such misunderstanding promoted awkward social dynamics where lonely individuals made themselves less desirable to interact with due to their over-exaggerations.

Some lonely people (Cf, Weiss 1973) exude an aura of desperation to partake in social exchange. Suppose a lonely person pursued such a social transaction. In that case, a non-lonely individual might not necessarily value what the lonely one offers and may have felt incongruent in their understanding of the social situation. These incongruencies could foster tensions and cause a lonely person to be seen as less desirable to interact with from the perspective of other non-lonely persons and others observing the lonely individual's interactions. Upon reflection of their perceived attempted or failed social interactions, the lonely person becomes more critical of themselves and aware of their perceived blunders, increasing self-awareness and vigilance. Increased attentiveness of the lonely individual obscures the appearance of their intent, where their attempts to socialize may be interpreted as disingenuous or misleading to other parties. As the lonely person begins to experience more social failures, their symptoms of loneliness are exacerbated, and thus the negative feedback loop is further perpetuated. If this feedback loop were to occur in a lonely immigrant, the combination of harmful effects could be damaging to their physical, psychological, and social well-being.

2.4. Perspectives on Loneliness

To best understand loneliness, the primary perspectives surrounding it were reviewed. Academic literature had two main views that influenced how loneliness was understood. First, loneliness was seen as a biological response to the human need to socialize. Second, loneliness was interpreted as an unprecedented epidemic that swept the globe.

2.4.1. Loneliness as Biology

Earlier theorists were clear about the crucial role of socialization in healthy human development. Erik Erikson, in the early 1960s, highlighted the imperative role social relationships played in human development with his Psychosocial Development Theory (Heinrich and Gullone 2006). Shortly following this in 1969, John Bowlby reinforced this notion in his widely used Attachment Theory (Heinrich and Gullone 2006; Polek et al. 2012). Like eating and drinking, humans need socialization to develop appropriately. When individuals required socialization, their bodies produced a physical response that indicated a need for being with others. Such responses were similar to those of being hungry or thirsty. Social relationships were so vital in human life that some scholars believed loneliness was an evolutionary response that had helped humanity's chances of survival (Baumeister and Leary 1995). After all, complex thought and cooperation were contributing factors for humanity's relative success, among other variables.

In the early stages of humanity, it was dangerous to be alone. Humans, therefore, evolved to live together in social groups (Haslam et al. 2009). As humans evolved, our social groups shaped our psychologies and gave us a sense of social identity (Haslam et al. 2009). Such groups and identities were beneficial to humans because they provided safe contexts to develop and learn from other members. They also offered social support, provided security, and instilled purpose and feelings of belonging. Importantly, social groups and identities acted as buffers against circumstances that would harm our physical conditions or mental health by providing members with coping mechanisms, among other resources (Haslam et al. 2009).

Initially, human groups were smaller and less socially complex. Bands were typical because they offered a significantly higher chance of survival and provided roles and meaning to their members. In early groups, social interactions occurred that increased food supply and developed many technologies. Early human history was rife with conflict and violence. Having trusted group members increased the efficacy of hunters and warriors. Bands then grew into tribes, tribes into chiefdoms, and chiefdoms into states. As human societies grew more complex, so did their advances and technologies. Close social interactions were so beneficial to human progress that certain practices remained in human societies and social groups throughout history. For example, caravans were used by immigrants coming to the United States from the North Triangle of South America (Crandall 2019). Though the members of immigrant caravans may have low trust, caravans prevent exploitation from ill-willed groups and help offset the harsh conditions they would otherwise have to traverse through alone (Crandall 2019). Having group members who share a common goal and work together is thus beneficial for the caravan's members despite their weak social ties.

Having a partner to share experiences was crucial to human cognitive functions and understanding things. An example of this was seen with United States veterans and post-traumatic stress disorder. Veteran and anthropologist Sebastian Junger (2016) described how a primary reason for the prevalence and persistence of post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans came from a lack of shared understanding and connection with people in their post-war social networks. When battle-fatigued veterans returned home, they were met with loneliness and surrounded by many who had never experienced what they did. This lack of understanding then compounded with their unclear role in society

and social difficulties relating to civilians. Such an environment promoted loneliness and was a substantial factor in developing and worsening post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans, whether they were combat or non-combat veterans (Junger 2016). The lack of resolution with such events caused depressive symptoms and, far too often, suicide. Belonging and having healthy social relationships were integral in human physical and cognitive survival.

The physical response of loneliness was so deeply ingrained within humanity that it has had staggering psychological, social, and cultural impacts. Cross-culturally, humans had an immense need to be accepted and belong (Rokach 1989; Heinrich and Gullone 2006). In fact, human thought fundamentally revolved around our attempts to understand the meanings and relationships of social events and interactions (Heinrich and Gullone 2006). Without acceptance and belonging, psychological complications like depression, anxiety, loneliness, as well as other issues swiftly followed suit (Heinrich and Gullone 2006). The fear of experiencing these emotions motivated humans to flee from isolation and seek embrace (Mijuskovic 1988; Heinrich and Gullone 2006). Though healthy social relations were no longer needed to survive in twenty-first century adulthood due to innovation, the effects of loneliness were still negatively experienced when social needs were not met.

In a virtual chat room experiment conducted by Gardner et al. (2000), they found that lower levels of social acceptance resulted in low levels of social learning and retention (Gardner et al. 2000; Heinrich and Gullone 2006). Many actions in society were influenced by social learning. Lonely peoples' societal functioning was hindered if one did not learn such actions or retain them. Data like this indicated that civic participation

and societal functioning became much more difficult younger individuals experienced long-term loneliness. These implications demonstrated the importance of examining loneliness, especially in the context of immigrant groups. Immigrants could migrate and be susceptible to loneliness at any age. Effects of immigrant status, age, and loneliness could intersect and cause severe and long-lasting consequences.

2.5.2. Loneliness as an Epidemic

A more contemporary perspective on loneliness was loneliness being an epidemic (Killeen 1998; Kar-Purkayastha 2010; Bound Alberti 2018; Health Resources and Service Administration 2019; Jeste et al. 2020). It was said that loneliness was a behavioral epidemic because it had risen from an individually oriented, secular, selfish, and materialist culture (Killeen 1998; Bound Alberti 2018). This response had caused various health effects for individuals ranging from physical to psychological (Killeen 1998). As loneliness's health effects were comparable to obesity (Bound Alberti 2018), the label was appropriate. Considering one aspect of loneliness was the negative feedback loop, symptoms could have produced socially undesirable people that retreated from society. Becoming reclusive lowered their potential to expand their social networks, making them more prone to loneliness. With other physical and psychological symptoms, loneliness posed a public health risk.

2.6. Predicting Variables of Loneliness

It was established that immigrants were susceptible to loneliness because of their uprooting (Handlin 1951). They also faced additional challenges that promoted the manifestation of loneliness. Factors like age (Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al.

2004; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015), gender (Gilmore et al. 2002; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al.2004; Ahmad et al. 2005; Aartsen and Jylha 2011; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015), marital status (Gilmore et al. 2002; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al. 2004; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015); duration of stay (Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Neto 2019), socioeconomic status (Gilmore et al. 2002; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al. 2004; Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019; ten Kate et al. 2020), context of reception (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015), perceived discrimination (Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004; Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012; Neto 2019; Suh et al. 2019; Tegegne and Glanville 2019), social network perception (Perlman and Peplau 1981; Victor et al. 2000; Iecovich et al. 2004; Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015; Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019), and feelings of belonging (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015; Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019; Tegegne and Glanville 2019; ten Kate et al. 2020) were all found to have contributed to feelings of loneliness and increased immigrants' potential of expericing it.

Many of the variables listed above were highly intersectional and could make immigrants' new place of residence an especially harmful social environment. This effect was especially problematic because immigrants could experience multiple adverse effects, contributing to their development of loneliness. I examined age, duration of stay, marital status, gender, socioeconomic status, perceived discrimination, and social networks for this study. These variables were emphasized because exploring them gave insight into other variables and illustrated the best picture of Spokane's Slavic population's experience with loneliness, given the limitations surrounding this project.

2.7. Social Networks

The concept of social networks was first introduced by J. A. Barnes when studying a Norwegian Island Parish called Bremnes. Within Bremnes, Barnes noted three social fields: territorial-based, industrial, and friendship and acquaintance (Barnes 1954). The friendship and acquaintance field proved to be a more dynamic field that differed for each individual and was deemed the "network" (Barnes 1954). This idea was central to understanding how loneliness manifested itself and how it was worsened or resolved.

Social networks were essential in understanding loneliness because of the services they provided their members. One such service was noted by Kahn and Antonucci (1979), who developed the notion of "social convoys." A social convoy was essentially a group of people closest to an individual in their social network. Social convoys emphasized how networks of friends and acquaintances reciprocated support (Kahn and Antonucci 1979). Through network-based expectations and obligations, social convoys served an essential role in the lives of individuals by helping them deal with their circumstances (Murty 2012).

The social convoy was important to note because its characteristics, like size and strength of relationships, may have affected how and whether an individual became lonely. Convoys could prevent loneliness by providing those within it emotional support (Tegegne and Glanville 2019). Studies found that immigrants lost their original social support networks, which caused stress and feelings of loneliness to emerge (Iecovich et al. 2004; Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004; Ahmad et al. 2005). These effects implied that people with smaller social convoys were less able to cope with changes and were likely to experience loneliness. Loneliness was even more likely to arise when someone lost

their social convey entirely. When immigrants migrated to a new country, they often experienced complete losses of convoys. A partnership could act as a convoy at the most basic level by acting as a buffer against loneliness (Grundy 2017). In a study conducted by Grundy (2017), it was found that immigrant men without a partner or with a long-distance partner experienced loneliness significantly more than men with a partner who migrated with them.

Social networks have been used to study loneliness extensively (Iecovich et al. 2004; de Miguel Luken and Tranmer 2010; Grieveld 2015; Wu and Penning 2015). Identifying networks and grasping how immigrant communities utilized them could foster a better understanding of how immigrants experienced and dealt with loneliness. A study on female South Asian immigrants saw that a loss of social support contributed to feelings of stress and loneliness (Ahmad et al. 2005). Another study on Russian-born Jews also determined that loss of social network resulted in feelings of loneliness (Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004). In Spain, an immigrant study found that networks helped accommodate changing circumstances and were primarily structured through social ties (de Miguel Luken and Tranmer 2010). These findings indicated that immigrants' involvement in a network and those who found new social convoys helped alleviate stressors and feelings of loneliness.

Broadly speaking, there were two categories of social networks. First were formal networks that consisted of institutions and networks that were formally established (Pichler and Wallace 2007). Formal networks were important because they demonstrated the established and accepted ways communities prescribed dealing with social issues. An

example of a formal social network would be a network derived from a church or organization that helped immigrants connect with other individuals in their new country.

The other types of networks were called informal networks. Informal networks were composed of informal bonds between people (Pichler and Wallace 2007). These networks were of particular interest in this study because they represented the problem-solving and adaptation of the immigrant groups in their new, foreign environment. However, a notable difference in the context of Slavic cultures was that they were typically more collectively oriented, whereas American culture was more individualistic. A shift from collective cultures to individualistic cultures could cause loneliness to manifest in immigrants (Luo et al. 2018). As many Slavic immigrants migrated from communist or post-communist countries, the effects of cultural shifts were relevant. To better understand how social networks arose and functioned, the concept of social capital was also explored.

2.8. Social Capital

In 1988, James S. Coleman proposed the idea of social capital. Like economic, human, and cultural capital, social capital was seen as a new form of investing (Coleman 1988). It was the most influential way of looking at and understanding networks. Social capital was generated from network exchanges grounded in norms of expectations, obligations, trust, and reciprocity (Coleman 1988; Kawachi and Berkman 2000; Putnam 2000). These mechanics allowed individuals to trade various resources within their groups to obtain more desired ones. For example, suppose an individual wanted to have their children watched for the weekend. In that case, they could have preemptively

watched another member of the group's children, expecting that the favor would be repaid when needed.

Commonly identified resources within networks were physical goods, services, information, and support (Coleman 1988; Murty 2012), which could all be traded for different resource types. These exchanges assigned value to non-monetary forms of resources and allowed for investment into different resource types. The value of resources was determined through context-specific network norms of expectation, obligation, trust, and reciprocity. When these aspects were lacking, networks became fragmented, consequently impeding the network's potential for good. Individuals who were aware of this could work within their culturally specific rules to obtain resources that would be otherwise inaccessible to them, thus strengthening the network as a result of its utilization.

Following its conception, social capital branched into two separate frameworks. The first perspective emphasized the role of social capital and the group (Coleman 1988; Putnam 2000). It did this by looking at how members of a group experienced a sense of solidarity and worked towards accumulating collectively shared resources (Lin 1999). In this framework, civic participation was a central theme and reflected the quality of a group's social capital and networks (Putnam 2000). From this stance, if there were higher civic participation in the group, then the members would be less likely to be lonely, as they would have been well connected.

The second perspective was more individually focused and examined how individuals invested in their networks to obtain resources embedded within the group (Coleman 1988; Portes 1998; Lin 1999). Through this lens, the effectiveness of a network

was determined by its benefits to the individual. Coleman and others had theorized

networks to be beneficial investments as they allowed access to resources that would

otherwise be inaccessible to people of its community (de Miguel Luken and Tranmer

2010; Coleman 1988; Kawachi and Berkman 2000; Murty 2012). While social capital

was not measured in this research, key elements from its individually oriented

perspectives assisted in explaining how networks were used to mediate feelings of

loneliness. This process was done by looking at aspects of social capital as it pertained to

the individual and identifying the role of networks in relation to perceptions of loneliness.

2.9. Social Networks, Social Capital, and Loneliness

One significant facet of social networks was their role in subjective well-being

(Murty 2012; Tegegne and Glanville 2019). Various scholars had identified several

positive effects that resulted from an individual having a strong personal network (Barnes

1954; Kahn and Antonucci 1979; Putnam 2000; Iecovich et al. 2004; Ahmad et al. 2005;

Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012; Tiwari 2013; Wu and Penning 2015; Tegegne and Glanville

2019). One notable role of networks in subjective well-being was providing emotional

support. Emotional support was usually prescribed for mental stressors like loneliness

(Iecovich et al. 2004). As exchanges happened within networks to access emotional

support, certain transactions and relationships became more functional and desired for

obtaining emotional support. Understanding this helped illuminate what sorts of actions

were taken to garner emotional support when someone was lonely.

An example of this was seen in the role of a church. While the primary purposes

of churches were to fulfill religious needs and duties, emotional support was another

benefit to them. Within ethnic communities, meaningful relationships were developed

between members and strengthened through solidarity of immigrant status, culture, and belief systems. Churches provided an outlet for these relationships and allowed their members to communicate more intimately. Such relationships were characterized by reciprocation of emotional support. By performing culturally specific social exchanges within the context of a church's network, individuals could use them as a medium to obtain other valued resources.

Within networks, relationships concerning specific resources appeared to be formal or informal. Formal networks existed for an intended purpose and had been culturally established. An example of this could be seen once again with the church. If an individual had religious needs, they would go to the church and interact with their staff and fellow members to satisfy them. When formal institutions did not meet the needs of the people, informal networks emerged. This phenomenon has been documented in Ukraine and arose when a government group aimed at preventing social isolation for the elderly was shut down (Iecovich et al. 2004). While this occurred in Ukraine, their culture responded to the need for a support system by developing an informal structure to assume the role of the prior. This event indicated that similar informal structures could be created within the context of the United States' Slavic immigrant communities in response to loneliness derived from the immigration process. In this instance, network actions could positively affect lonely community members.

While in most literature, social networks have been said to act as a positive structure (Putnam 2000), some scholars found that they were not always beneficial (Menjivar 2000; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Hellermann 2006; Tegegne and Glanville 2019). When trying to examine a network or social capital, the interest of the group and

the individual could sometimes be unaligned. A social network could have the capacity to benefit all of its members indirectly but may be more favorable for some members compared to others (Menjivar 2000). This disproportionality was particularly important when analyzing emotional support within a network. If some members had more access to emotional transactions than others, certain groups within the network might be more lonely.

A study on Eastern European immigrant women in Portugal found that single female immigrants faced many stigmas, were forced into poor working conditions, and often started their new life indebted to other members of the network (Hellermann 2006). This study showed that while there were resources to be gained by being in a network, some experienced unfair treatment and exploitation based on demographic factors such as sex and marital status. Because of the cultural stigmas surrounding being a single female, their network proved more harmful than favorable. With the context of networks being integral in their functioning, it could not be stated how the inequalities were seen across different communities and would be worth exploring.

2.9.1. Identity

Identity was another key factor in network efficacy. Generally, identity was described as a dynamic concept that consisted of three core processes (Kaniušonytė et al. 2019). First was a commitment, which influenced an individual's developmental choices and the confidence that came from such choices (Kaniušonytė et al. 2019). The second was an in-depth exploration that caused people to reflect upon their choices (Kaniušonytė et al. 2019). The third process was then described as a reconsideration of commitment. Current obligations were compared with alternative ones and assessed to determine if it

would be more or less beneficial to stay in their group or find another (Kaniušonytė et al. 2019). These ongoing processes influenced peoples' perception of their place and sense of belonging in their group as they interacted with other group members (Cicognani et al. 2014). The more significant interactions between group members, the more an individual's identity conformed (Cicognani et al. 2014; Kaniušonytė et al. 2019).

Living in groups and identifying with them was central to the human psyche and was crucial in interactions with the world (Haslam et al. 2009). Being a part of a social group and identifying with that group provided coping mechanisms to help a plighted individual offset harmful effects derived from their changing circumstances or from being a part of a disadvantaged group (Haslam et al. 2009), such as being a first-generation immigrant. Unlike those outside the group, people belonging to the same social group did not generally view other group members as others but rather extensions of themselves due to their shared identity (Haslam et al. 2009). Having a shared sense of identity was seen as a form of social support that benefited individuals and modified how other forms of social support were given and received (McIntyre et al. 2018).

Having a shared identity allowed group members to reciprocate support like emotional support much more effectively because their identity promoted a better mutual understanding of one's conditions (Haslam et al. 2009). The supported person then felt more at ease with the idea that they were receiving support if they shared a common identity. This extension of self and feeling of belonging promoted usage of such social support systems and prevented suffering participants from doing so in isolation and alone (Haslam et al. 2009). In a study conducted on university students, it was found that shared identity in a group of friends was highly effective in preventing harmful mental

stressors like feelings of anxiety, depression, paranoia, and loneliness (McIntyre et al. 2018).

While social groups and social identities were, for the most part, positive, some factors could cause an individual to perceive them as negative. Suppose someone from a given community experienced a change in their social status or self-perception that yielded negative results. In that case, the social network might be considered harmful to them. It would be detrimental because an adverse change in identity could cause a sense of loss or isolation. If their identity was grounded in cultural norms, this could also lead to cultural bereavement in the new host country (Bhugra and Becker 2005). This research attempted to understand how different demographic factors and identities influence loneliness and how they affect network solutions.

2.10. Comparative Studies

Studies that have analyzed loneliness in similar cultural groups showed an interesting pattern in their results. In a study conducted by Djundeva and Ellwardt (2019) on loneliness in Polish migrants in the Netherlands and one conducted by Dolberg et al. (2016) comparing older and newer former Soviet Union immigrant loneliness, relatively high levels of loneliness were seen in both populations. Notably, variables such as language proficiency, income, and subjective well-being were all related to feelings of loneliness.

Djundeva and Ellwardt (2019) sought to find how large and diverse networks composed of kin and non-kin relationships influenced loneliness in Polish migrants. Their hypothesis was proven correct using latent class analysis, multinomial logistic regression

analysis, and logistic regression models. In their study, Djundeva and Ellwardt (2019) found that 60% of their sampled population was considered lonely and low levels of trust were present in their community. Participants who had higher language proficiency had access to larger networks with more meaningful members and were less lonely (Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019). Djundeva and Ellwardt (2019) also found that those who attended church had more diverse and trusting networks. Diverse networks were more trusting and had more meaningful members offered more social support systems that helped prevent loneliness (Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019). Unemployed participants with low income and poorer health were exceptionally prone to loneliness (Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019). Those who did not have diverse networks or networks with meaningful people also had the highest levels of loneliness as social support systems were the primary indicator of loneliness (Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019).

Dolberg et al. (2016) studied how older former Soviet Union (FSU) immigrants compared with newer FSU immigrants' loneliness over four years using Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement in Europe panel data about an immigrant in Israel. Using UCLA's loneliness scale as their measuring tool, Dolberg et al. (2016) found that FSU immigrants had high levels of loneliness. However, loneliness decreased over time with an increased duration of stay (Dolberg et al. 2016). They also saw that age, marital status, and mental health were significant predictors of loneliness (Dolberg et al. 2016).

These studies demonstrated how loneliness had been seen in Slavic immigrants but examined populations that differ from Spokane's Slavic community. Using their information, I chose to inquire about variables like age, marital status, socioeconomic status, duration of stay, and social networks constitution. Based on their results, I

suspected Spokane's Slavic immigrants had experienced loneliness but had become less lonely over time. The qualitative nature of this project helped explore how this transformation had come to be and highlight more of how their specific cultural networks worked to alleviate loneliness and other stresses derived from immigration.

2.11. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I covered literature that discussed the definition of loneliness as well as its various symptoms and forms. The relationship between loneliness, social networks, and social capital was then explored to show why my approach to this project was necessary for understanding loneliness. Loneliness was related to social networks and elements of social capital. Understanding their relationship helps explain what networks need to prevent or mediate loneliness. A byproduct of participating in a social network was the establishment of identity with that network. Those with a strong sense of identity were less likely to be lonely. I then concluded by examining some comparative studies that researched similar topics and discussed their findings.

Chapter Three

Immigrant Profiles

3.1. Introduction

This chapter tells the history of Slavic immigrants in the United States, Washington State, and Spokane. I discuss the various motivations and waves of migration that the United States has seen. I then describe the role of multiple aspects of their cultural groups and identities. The history of Slavic immigration is essential in understanding the current moment and the community in Spokane, WA. It was complex and had often been omitted and overlooked throughout American history. With roots that predated the formation of some American states, Slavic immigrants have had a profound role in the development of the United States and have been here since its inception.

I then discuss Slavic migration's history, waves, and motivations for the first part of this chapter. The two groups of Slavic immigrants I examine are Russians and Ukrainians, as they constituted the bulk of my research population. Despite two participants being from other former Soviet Union countries, information on their migration to the United States was limited. By examining Russian and Ukrainian immigration history, we can see how, when, and why they chose to migrate to the United States. Their reasons and means of immigrating are necessary were exploring how, why, or if loneliness develops in their populations. An immigrant's context of reception and reasons for emigrating were critical predictors of their experiences in the United States that could contribute to perceived discrimination. In this section, I give a profile of what current information says about their presence in Washington State, their numbers in

Spokane, WA. I also provide brief overviews of the history of their immigration and the various waves of immigration that the United States has seen.

The second part of the chapter explores the identities of Russian and Ukrainians in the United States who have acted as big influencers in the broader Slavic identity. Discussing these is important for understanding how this project's population of Slavic immigrants could avoid and overcome loneliness. Understanding their identity explains why there were mixed feelings about Spokane's Slavic community's social network and why some members were marginalized or willing to detach themselves from their ethnic groups.

3.2. Demographic Profile of Russian and Ukrainian Immigrants in the United States

In 2019, the United States was home to over 44.9 million immigrants from around the globe (Balatova et al. 2021). Of them, there were 391,641 Russians and 345,250 Ukrainians reported (U.S. Census 2019). However, other tabulations from 2016 suggest 397,000 Russian and 348,000 Ukrainian immigrants were in the United States (Alperin and Balatova 2018). In 2019, it was also estimated that 2,432,733 Russian and 1,009,874 Ukrainian identifying individuals lived in the United States (U.S. Census 2019).

Currently, Ukrainian immigrants are the third-largest immigrant group still coming to the United States and are only topped by refugees from the Congo and Myanmar (Hauslohner 2020). Due to immigration policies that encouraged the migration of persecuted Christians to the United States, it was expected that the number of Ukrainian immigrants would increase (Hauslohner 2020). Their numbers continued

rising, and their cultural footprints were found across many American states and communities.

3.3. Overview of Russian migration to the United States

During the early years of the United States, Russian settlers lived in Alaskan territories. The first Russian expedition to Alaska was sent in 1741 (Chyz and Roucek 1939). By 1784, the first Russian settlement was established on the Aleutian Islands, Alaska (Library of Congress n.d.), though Chyz and Roucek (1939) state it was in 1785 on the Island of Kadyak. After their arrival, Russian Cossack settlers fought violently with native populations over land and hunting territories while looting native settlements (Chyz and Roucek 1939). In 1795, Russian colonists established the first Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

Initially, the Russian Tsar claimed the Alaskan areas (Library of Congress n.d.). In 1801, Alexander Baranov established the settlement of Sitka and was in control of Alaska until 1861. Soon after, the Russian Government assumed control (Chyz and Roucek 1939). In 1867, Russia sold Alaska to the Americans for $7,200,000 (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

After settling in Alaska, Russian settlers began creating other settlements down the Pacific Northwest coastline and further into Alaska, planting Russian Orthodox churches and converting local indigenous groups (Library of Congress n.d.). One notable colony was an agricultural colony in California called Fort Ross, established in 1812 (Chyz and Roucek 1939). The Russian population soon withdrew from it when land disputes between the Americans and the Mexican Government arose (Chyz and Roucek

1939). In 1841, the colonists sold their settlement to a Swiss descending Mexican citizen (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

In Russian, there was a severe land shortage following the sale of Alaska in the 1880s (Library of Congress n.d.). Many farmers and peasants migrated to the United States, overwhelmingly claiming that their migration was caused by unfair land distribution (Chyz and Roucek 1939). However, ethnic Russians stayed in Russia at this time (Library of Congress n.d.).

From 1820 to 1870, only 3,886 Russian immigrants were recorded in the United States (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Between 1871 and 1880, an estimate of 39,284 Russians migrated to America (Chyz and Roucek 1939). However, many immigrants from Eastern Europe were falsely grouped in the category of "Russian," so the number of actual Russians is unknown (Chyz and Roucek 1939). By 1880, Alaska had 33,426 people that consisted of some Russians, but the majority were native populations (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Siberian exiles also continued to come to Alaska but then migrated to California or Mexico (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

On the eastern side of the United States, the first known Russian immigrant was Prince Demetrius Augustine Golitsyn, a Catholic who came to the northeastern United States in 1792 (Chyz and Roucek 1939). He later became America's first Russian Catholic Priest and was disinherited by the Tsar (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Little was known about Russians prior to 1870, though a few Russian names were on Civil War documents (Chyz and Roucek 1939). However, in California, a Ukrainian named Andrew Agapiy Honcharenko published the first Russian newspaper in the United States, though the *Alaskan Herald* did have pieces written in Russian (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

Interestingly, Honcharenko criticized the Russians in California for not forming a progressive society (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Sometime between 1866 and 1868, Vladimir K. Gayns, a retired Captain of the Imperial Russian Army, migrated to Kansas, then later to Oregon and attempted to plant voluntary communist communities (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Later, many other prolific Russian immigrants would help establish lasting structures and settlements like the American Socialist Labour Party, Carnegie Hall in New York, and Petersburg, Florida (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

Between 1881 to 1894, Russia's ruler Alexander III enacted harsh laws and enabled the persecution of Russian Jews, Russian Protestants like the *Dukhobors* and *Molokans*, White Russians called *Staroveries*, German Mennonite decedents, Ukrainian *Stundists*, and other critics of the Russian Orthodox Church (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Mistreatment and harsh economic conditions caused them to flee from Russia to the United States. Many other politically threatening people to the Imperialist Russian Government were also exiled during this time (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

Immediately before World War I, it was estimated that a total of 1.6 million Russian immigrants came to the United States from 1900 to 1910 (Massey 1995). Though, by 1910 the U.S. Census had only recorded 65,000 Russians in America (Library of Congress n.d.). During World War I, Russian emigration almost ceased entirely (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

Shortly after the war in 1917, the Russian Imperialist Government fell to the Bolsheviks and was plunged into civil war (Library of Congress n.d.). As communism took hold of Russian, millions fled, with another 30,000 migrating to America (Library of Congress n.d.). This wave of immigrants was known as "White Russians" for their

resistance to the "Red" communist State (Library of Congress n.d.). Many White Russians were affluent elite members of society and welcomed by the United States Government (Library of Congress n.d.). However, they were not warmly received by the generations of immigrants before them, who had suffered abuses and marginalization from the previous Russian Imperialist Government (Library of Congress n.d.). The White Russians then experienced discrimination once fears of communism spread throughout America (Library of Congress n.d.). Those who had once welcomed were now met with suspicion and intolerance.

Between 1919 and 1921, Russian communities and political groups were spied upon, and some were deported to the Soviet Union without trial (Library of Congress n.d.). Despite this, and fearing a second World War, some well-educated Russian immigrants would still manage to migrate to the United States up until the 1930s (Library of Congress n.d.). During the Bolshevik Revolution and the communist era, immigration numbers decreased from 65,000 in the 1920s to 1,400 in the 1930s (Massey 1995).

From 1921 to 1931, 62,077 educated Russians came to the United States (Chyz and Roucek 1939). According to the 1930's census, there were 315,721 foreign-born Russian-speaking peoples in the United States (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Due to categorical errors and incorrect labels, this number was not indicative of the actual number of Russians (Chyz and Roucek 1939). For example, this recorded population consisted of Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Czechoslovakians, Austrians, and Hungarians (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Another example shows how the 1930s census category of "Russian speakers" also included the 3,000 Ukrainian *Studnists* who settled in North Dakota (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Ukrainians identifying as *Rusin* or *Rusnak* also fell into

these categories (Chyz and Roucek 1939). Other data derived from the Bureau of

Immigration showed that between 1899 and 1930, 266,632 Russians immigrated to the

United States, while 114,656 emigrated from the United Stated from 1908 to 1930 (Chyz

and Roucek 1939), leaving a net increase of 151,976 new Russian immigrants. Immigrant

data aggregations that accounted for death and emigration suggested that by 1930 there

were 89,727 living first-generation and 141,990 second-generation Russian immigrants in

the United States (Chyz and Roucek 1939). However, over the 50 years prior to the

1930s, there were believed to have been a total of 340,959 Russian immigrants (Chyz and

Roucek 1939).

After World War II, 20,000 Russians categorized as "displaced persons" migrated

to the United States (Library of Congress n.d.). The Soviet Union then saw that many of

their scientists and artists were choosing to emigrate from Russian and enacted strict

emigration restrictions in 1952 (Library of Congress n.d.). Henceforth, emigration

became a dangerous process, and immigrants would face significant consequences

(Library of Congress n.d.). For two decades, the Soviet Union would sever ties between

the emigrants and their families and renounce their citizenship. They would even make it

illegal to mention their name in Soviet lands (Library of Congress n.d.). Russian

immigration during this period would become stagnant and fall, only reaching over 2,500

Russian immigrants to the United States after the 1970s (Massey 1995).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the Russian Government

removed emigration restrictions (Library of Congress n.d.). Russians and other members

of the old Soviet States were free to migrate to the United States once again (Library of

Congress n.d.). Russian immigrant numbers continued to rise, as many faced religious

persecution in their home countries, and American policies and churches helped arrange their continued migration.

3.4. Overview of Ukrainian migration to the United States

Ukrainians have had a rich history in the United States and have been here since before the country's formation. Historically, it was challenging to tell where the Ukrainian immigrants came from due to the fractured state of Ukraine and the allocation of its territories between conflicting European rulers. It was thought that the first Ukrainians heard about the New World through writings of Joannes Glogoviensis and Jan Stobnica, as well as from the manuscripts of the holy monk Maxim Grek (Chyz 1939). While it is unclear when the first true Ukrainians settled in modern United States territories, the first documented Ukrainians with ethnic names arrived in New York in 1662 (Chyz 1939). One of the first Ukrainian settlers reported in local literature was an exile from Poland named Albert Zaborowskij, who came to the United States and started the Zabarishie family (Chyz 1939; The Ukrainian Weekly 1943). In 1726, an increase in immigrants with Ukrainian sounding names was noted in Pennsylvania (Chyz 1939).

During the American Revolutionary War against Britain, soldiers with Ukrainian names were recorded on registers (Chyz 1939). Around this time, exiles banished to Serbia began migrating to Alaskan lands to resettle (Chyz 1939). In 1805, a Ukrainian expedition leader named Demianenko was killed near Yakutat, Alaska, and in 1806, a former court clerk named Naplavko attempted a coup de tat of a Russian governor Alexander A. Baranov in the Alaskan area (Chyz 1939; The Ukrainian Weekly 1943).

In 1812, a supply depot settlement for Alaska was founded in California and called Fort Ross (Chyz 1939). Here, many Ukrainians settled but were mistaken for Russians (Chyz 1939). During the American Civil War, Ukrainian immigrants were also present in Union and Confederate armies. They fought alongside Polish immigrants and Americans (Chyz 1939). In 1865, Andreas Ahapius Honcharenko, a Ukrainian Orthodox priest from Kyiv, fled the area to escape persecution from the Russian Government and was the first officially recognized Ukrainian immigrant to arrive in the U.S. (Chyz 1939). Later, he became an editor for the *Alaska Herald*, where he wrote about law and was the first in American to print Shevchenko poems (Chyz 1939).

The first significant wave of Ukrainian immigration to the United States was in 1876It happened in response to the United States recovering from The Great Depression (Chyz 1939). Cheap labor was in demand, and American steamships were sent to Europe to recruit workers (Chyz 1939). Ukrainians who were working in Austria and Hungary had made ten to fifteen times less than American coal miners and seized the opportunity to emigrate for a chance at accumulating wealth and acquiring newfound freedoms (Chyz 1939). However, this was a complicated process as the Austrian and Hungarian governments enacted anti-migration policies to keep their cheap labor force in their lands (Chyz 1939). Many of these immigrants did not achieve their goals of freedom and economic opportunity.

En route and upon arrival to the United States, it was common for Ukrainian immigrants to be scammed and exploited into signing contracts that sent them to sugar plantations in Hawaii or police ran mining camps in West Virginia (Chyz 1939). It was such a common occurrence that in the 1900s, the United States Congress had to pass

special laws to combat their newfound "practical slavery" (Chyz 1939). For those who made it, they resettled where they could find work.

Principal Investigator of Canadian Ethnic Studies Victor Satzewich suggested there were four primary waves of Ukrainian immigration to the United States (U.A. Post 2019. From 1899 to 1914, the first wave was where Ukrainian peasants came to elude oppression from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires (Satzewich 2003; U.A. Post 2019). Many of these immigrants moved to North Dakota (U.A. Post 2019). It was estimated that at the start of this wave, approximately 254,000 Ukrainians settled in North Dakota and that by 1909, there were 470,000 first and second-generation Ukrainian immigrants, though identities were fractured, and the precise numbers are difficult to evaluate (Halich 1937; U.A. Post 2019). The Second Wave of immigration took place shortly after around 1917, during the Bolshevik Revolution, where 12,000 Ukrainian patriots came to the United States to escape the turmoil and brought along a stronger sense of ethnic identity (Satzewich 2003; U.A. Post 2019).

The third wave of immigration resulted from World War II from 1947 to 1955 (Satzewich 2003; U.A. Post 2019). After suffering the loss of one-sixth of their population, about 80,000 Ukrainians came to American bringing a strong ethnic identity and had a goal of exposing Americans to more of Ukrainian culture (Satzewich 2003; U.A. Post 2019). Years later, from 1991 onward, the economic wave of Ukrainian immigrants came to the United States (Satzewich 2003; U.A. Post 2019). Between 1992 and 1997, 107,916 Ukrainian immigrants came to America (Satzewich 2003; U.A. Post 2019).

While many immigrants came for economic reasons, others left due to traumatic experiences between conflicts in Ukraine and Russia (U.A. Post 2019). A significant spike in immigration could be seen in the early 2000s, with a slow decline until 2015, where numbers once again increased (Klokiw 2020). Current estimations predicted that these numbers would continue to rise due to the United States immigration policy regarding persecuted Christians and refugees from ex-Soviet countries (Hauslohner 2020). Some have even speculated on the formation of a fifth wave of immigration due to recent trends from 2014 onward (Klokiw 2020).

3.5. Russian and Ukrainian Immigrants in Washington State

In Washington State, it was estimated that there were 20,047 Russian and 60,219 other Eastern European immigrants in 2019 (Migration Policy Institute n.d.). An article from *The Seattle Times* estimated that Washington was home to approximately 15,000 Russian and Ukrainian refugees in 1994 (Ashton 1994). While it was unknown how many Ukrainian immigrants reside within Washington, one estimate in 2014 stated that 52,445 people had Ukrainian ancestry (Jones 2014). Though many of these immigrants were estimated to live near the Puget sound near the Seattle and Lynwood metropolitan areas (Jones 2014; Hauslohner 2020), a substantial amount was located in the Inland Northwest (Molnár 2009).

3.6. Russian and Ukrainian Immigrants in Spokane

In 2019, Spokane was estimated to have a population of 222,081 people, which is composed of 5.4% foreign-born residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). According to the 2000 Census, there were approximately 5,000 Ukrainian immigrants in Spokane (Shors

2004), and their numbers have continued to grow. A later census showed that there were roughly 7,700 Ukrainian immigrants who accounted for 2.5% of Spokane's population (Kyiv Post 2002). Between 1989 and 1994, it had been reported that between 4,000 to 5,000 Russian and Ukrainian Baptist or Pentecostal refugees resided in Spokane (Ashton 1994). However, there were no estimations on the number of Russian immigrants residing in Spokane or more recent estimates on the number of Ukrainian immigrants.

Russian and Ukrainian immigrants consisted of a large portion of Spokane's immigrant community and have been established for many years. Some relevant and recent estimates suggested that there were 25,000 Russian-speaking people (Vestal 2008), 30,000 Ukrainians (Deshais 2011), 3,770 Russian-speaking households, and 1,013 other Slavic language-speaking households in Spokane (Spokane Regional Health District 2018). Though empirical data is unknown, posts on local forum boards notice the number of Russians present in the area. Anecdotal evidence also suggested that there are many Russian and Ukrainian people.-Although it may not be apparent at first, many Russian and Ukrainian-owned businesses and community organizations like markets and churches reside throughout Spokane. They consider themselves a part of Spokane's community and well-integrated (Kyiv Post 2002).

3.7. Russian identity

Information on Russian identity within the United States was sparse. Perhaps this stemmed from the Red Scare, where many Russian immigrants would forego their identities, culture, and heritage to blend in better with the American population (Library of Congress n.d.). One thing that appeared in immigration reports was the differences in the types of Russian immigrants who have migrated to the United States. Initially, the

ones who came before the official formation of the 50-state United States were settlers

and of lower status. Following them was a wave of Russian farmers who were not

ethnically Russian (Library of Congress n.d.). This trend later created tensions between

the next wave of Russian immigrants, which consisted of the imperialist elites who had

previously ruled over the farmers (Library of Congress n.d.). Despite both being Russian,

it appeared that there was an in-group distinction between the earlier generations of

Russian immigrants and the 1910s wave of immigrants. This distinction seems derived

from class and position in the Russian social hierarchy.

After the formation of the Soviet Union, Russian identity in the United States

appeared to have become fractured and fragmented. Many began to keep their ethnicity

secret to prevent deportation and persecution (Library of Congress n.d.). Anxiety over the

United States Government's actions led many to convert to Protestantism from

Orthodoxy, and some would even change their names and identity (Library of Congress

n.d.). This dynamic between the United States and the Soviet Union would change and

affect Russian immigrants' identity to come.

3.9.2. Ukrainian identity

The Ukrainian identity had many different factors influencing how and who

immigrants consider themselves to be. In the 1930s, American authors would refer to

Ukrainian immigrants as Little Russians, Ruthenians, and Russniak (Chyz 1939).

Immigrants who favored Russia referred to themselves as Little Russians, Russians, or

Carpatho-Russians (Chyz 1939). However, locals generally referred to those who

supported Ukraine as Roosins, Lemkos, or Carpatho-Ukrainians (Chyz 1939). In the

1930s, "Ukrainian" described immigrants from Soviet Ukraine, Ukrainian territories of

Soviet Russia, Soviet-occupied Western Ukraine, Rumanian provinces of Bukovina and

Bessarabia, Hungarian ruled Carpatho-Ukraine, and German and Slavic occupied

Lemkivschina (Chyz 1939).

3.9.3. Slavic Identity

Historically, "Russian" has been used to describe many different groups of Slavic

immigrants. The Ukrainian Andrew Agapiy Honcharenko demonstrated this by

advertising his newspaper as Russian even though he was Ukrainian (Chyz and Roucek

1939). From the 1930s and mostly onward, the category of "Russian" was said to

describe a variety of groups, including Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Czechoslovakian,

Austrian, and Hungarian peoples (Chyz and Roucek 1939). However, more categories

like "Polish" have been included in the United States Census in more recent years.

During a mission from the Russian Orthodox Church starting in 1891, many

Ukrainian Greek-Catholics converted to the Russian Orthodoxy, which was responsible

for many Ukrainians changing their identity to "Russian" (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

Alongside this, many other Slavic immigrants were perceived to be Russians by

Americans and the United States government. Such groups included the Ukrainian

Stundists and German Mennonites, who were not ethnically or culturally Russian but

were often mislabeled as so in early American history (Chyz and Roucek 1939).

After the Red Scare era of United States history, Russian and other Slavic

immigrants saw an erosion of their identity to avoid systemic discrimination and

deportation (Library of Congress n.d.). In more contemporary times, it seemed that their

reconstructed identities have been built around their Russian language use, faith groups, and general apathy to the misnomer "Russian."

Due to the conquests of the Russian Imperial Government and the Soviet Union, many Slavic immigrants speak Russian. My data showed that the use of the Russian language created no harmful sentiment between Russians and other Slavic immigrants. It demonstrated that the label name did not matter as much as its practicality. With the mass conversion of Ukrainians to the Russian Orthodoxy that caused them to change their identities, faith seemed to have an important role (Chyz and Roucek 1939). In Spokane, most of its Russian population was not entirely Russian (Egan 2001). However, "Russian" had become the accepted title among immigrants (Egan 2001). My data also revealed how general attitudes reflected this. Generally, Slavic immigrants' ethnic and national labels seemed secondary to their faith labels, and the resulting identity was further explored in chapter five.

3.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter gave an immigrant profile of first-generation Slavic immigrants in the United States. An immigrant profile was needed to help make sense of the current social circumstances of their community. Slavic immigrant communitys' roots run deep, and they have established themselves in various parts of the United States throughout many different periods. Americans' opinions on Slavic immigrants have changed drastically throughout history. Slavic immigrants have been treated unfairly in the past and have adapted accordingly to each situation. Throughout their various conditions within the United States, identities have fragmented but been remade anew. This phenomenon gives insight into the basis of Slavic identity in Spokane.

Chapter Four

Becoming American and Life in a New Land

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I recounted stories of how Slavic immigrants in Spokane experienced loneliness. Using a guiding case study, I examined how one participant's pre-migration experience was integral in his decision to migrate and how his post-migration experiences shaped his perception of becoming well adapted and his level of loneliness. I also included other participants' stories and described their experiences in relation. The participants' stories brought forth key variables that helped or hindered the development of loneliness. Their stories also showed how identities and changes in conditions helped participants adjust to their new lives. I also highlighted and discussed how sociometric indicators shaped feelings of loneliness. The depth and variability of loneliness were also explored. This chapter provided the foundation for analyzing how participants specifically utilize their social networks to prevent loneliness and help with adaptation.

4.2. Life in Communist Russia as a Christian

Adrian was a sixty-one-year-old male Russian Baptist. He came to the United States because of religious persecution, poor economic conditions, and the First Chechen War. In Russia, he was a factory worker and later a soldier. He was married with a large family and moved to Spokane in 1995. Currently, Adrian works in the healthcare sector.

Adrian was born in a city in western Russia that had a population of one million. He spent most of his life there and liked talking about it. He mentioned how the city rested along Volga River, which Adrian told was much like the Columbia River in the United States. The two rivers contained sturgeon, which Adrian liked to fish, and described how the Columbia River reminded him of his home city.

Growing up, Adrian went to school in his home city. He recalled how his school curriculum taught that no God existed, and his peers scoffed at the idea. Adrian said his teacher was sensitive to him, knowing that his family was Christian, but discouraged religion nonetheless. As he grew up, others mocked him for his beliefs, claiming that no educated person could believe in a religion. Adrian did not remain in school for long. Once he completed his eighth grade, Adrian quit school to work in a steel factory.

Adrian explained how under communism, physical labor was more valuable than continuing education or doing other forms of labor. He said it made sense for students to quit school and work in a factory for more money. As a factory worker, Adrian spent all his time with non-Christians and grew tired of their lifestyle. His family was Christian, and he was familiar with the religion. However, Adrian described how he was not practicing Christianity to the degree of considering himself a Christian. As Adrian experienced a secular lifestyle far different from the one he was accustomed to, his interest in Christianity grew. After some time in the steel factory, Adrian had to do mandatory military service.

It was 1979, during the Cold War when Adrian was conscripted and began military training. During his training, Adrian explained how senior soldiers had the authority to make other soldiers do whatever they desired. His sergeants and other senior

soldiers would often harass and provoke him by saying things contradicting his value system. In one example, Adrian's sergeants tried to get him to use curse words. According to Adrian, cursing was common in Russia, but he refused to do so. The sergeants' pestering continued until they confronted Adrian and told him he could no longer eat if he did not curse. Considerable time passed, and near the end of the ordeal, his sergeant became enfeebled. The sergeant accused Adrian of practicing magic but then had a change of heart and left Adrian alone, along with other soldiers. Later in Adrian's military service, he was assigned by the government to assist farmers in a small village. In this village, his life was threatened because of his beliefs. He described the event as follows.

"I could hear them [soldiers] talking, but I could not understand what they were talking about. Then I heard one guy was screaming really loudly. He said, 'I will kill him!' I thought, 'uh-oh, this could be about me.' Then in about ten minutes, my door was opened, and I saw a really big guy. He was strong; he had like big muscles … He came to me, and he said something about if I believed in God. I said, 'yes.' So, he asked his friends to leave so it would be just him and me, and he said- when I said I believed in God, he was screaming, 'show me your God!' … He asked me, 'read me something from the Bible about wine.' … I opened Ephesians 5:18, and I read it, like 'Do not get drunk with wine because you will start doing debauchery. But, be filled with the spirit,' and he said- I think his friends came, and he told his friends, 'give me this debauchery,' and so they poured in, we have metal cups, and he offered it to me. He said, 'drink,' I said, 'no,' so he drank it himself and told his friends to leave. He told me, 'it makes me mad when I see young guy who believes in God.' So, he was walking between beds, and I could see he was really … angry. His face was red, and he was squeezing his fists. I thought, 'well, if he will punch from the wall, I would fly,' 'cause he was really big guy. I was scared, and I prayed …

A couple times his friends would come in. They wanted to take him out of me because they were afraid he would do something. So he would tell them, 'just get out' and he was ready to- he would smash all of them, 'cause they were not a match for him. I just kept praying, and I felt that it was not just him being there, it was kind of the presence of evil in the room, so it made it even scarier.

At one point, he went to the window, on the windowsill … he got a knife … I saw it in his hand. It was not the whole knife. It was a blade … but it was long enough … He was holding knife in front of his face and looked at me. He

said, 'do you believe in eternal life?' I said, 'yeah.' 'Do you want to go there?' At first, I thought, I wanted to say, 'it's not up to you. It's in God's hands,' and then I thought, 'well, if I say this, I might push him to do it.' I thought, 'well, why should I tell him anything?' I just prayed, and I said, 'Lord if you want me to go, it's okay. If not, you will not let him.'

He got up, and he came to me. Since it was hot and we had no air conditioner … we just had pants … no shirt, nothing on top. So, he came to me, and he put knife real close to my stomach … and I was looking at that, and I saw in front of me his six-pack, and I saw him breathing. I was ready that- I will … I felt like my life is over. 'This is it.' I felt that I was already in heaven with Jesus because I felt good, that next after, I will be in heaven, in less than a minute. Then, I looked at this separation and looked my eyes at him, and I thought, 'something is not right here,' and I could not understand what was not right. Then I realized, 'ah, I don't have fear anymore.' I thought, 'well, how could that be when he was about to hit me?' It surprised me. I had feared death, and now I have no fear, and I could not understand … He was standing for about a minute, then he threw it away, and he said, 'no, it's too early for you to go then.' It was kind of interesting to hear it from him. Then his friends came, and they took him away, so he was not resisting anymore, after that."

Adrian attributed his survival to Jesus and avoided confrontation after that.

After Adrian's military service, he continued to work at a factory, got married, and had multiple children. He recalled only having one long-term friend but was on good terms with other Christians that he knew in his hometown. Because of the state and public views on Christianity, Adrian practiced in underground churches and continued to experience religious persecution. Russian Orthodoxy had a substantial presence in Russia but was separate and had a different role from Protestant Christianity. Adrian elaborated by telling how many Russians would be baptized in the Orthodox church at birth but cease participating in the religion afterward. He later moved to St. Petersburg, Russia, which was home to five or six million at the time. In 1994, the First Chechen War between Russia and Chechnya began. Adrian became for his sons' well-being because he

did not want them to go to war. Like many other immigrants, Adrian then started contemplating migration.

Adrian's pre-migration story and many other Slavic immigrants I interacted with the past several months show vivid instances in which they were threatened for their beliefs. For participants who moved to the United States during adulthood, religious persecution was a common motivation for migration. Discriminatory systems were instituted that limited or excluded Christians from the economy. Another participant called Dmitri, a sixty-five-year-old male Russian Christian who moved to Spokane at a similar age as Adrian, recounted how Christians could not get specific jobs or receive post-high school education because of their religion. Such marginalization made their home country conditions unwelcoming and socioeconomically disadvantaging. Dmitri describes how most common people lived in lower-middle-class economic conditions, regardless of their professions. Religious persecution added to the hardships of raising families in poorer economic conditions, especially since there was also the threat of violence. Considering what the United States could offer them, safety and a higher socioeconomic status were important in their decisions to migrate.

Many of my informants remembered job loss, education discrimination, and living as a second citizen. Some informants were not old enough to experience persecution or socio-economic hardships. However, they mentioned how their families had experienced them, forcing them to migrate elsewhere. Attachment to their homeland was present, albeit less because of their socio-economic conditions and age of migration. Also, factoring in the potential for war and mandatory military conscription, all Slavic participants' motivation for migration was high.

4.3. Resettling in America

As stated in the previous chapter, Slavic immigrants have had a long history and presence in the United States. Many Slavic immigrants settled in Spokane because of social networks. Adrian credited his sister as to why he migrated to Spokane. She had moved to Spokane in the 1990s and recommended he come. In Spokane, she associated with churches and was familiar with sponsorship programs that helped Slavic Christians emigrate from communist and post-communist countries. Adrian recalled how his sister informed him about a church sponsorship program that enabled him and his family to come to the United States. He then went to the United States embassy in Moscow and told them how his religious beliefs threatened his life. After completing other procedures, the United States embassy approved his migration.

Many Slavic immigrants came to the area in the 1980s and 1990s in a steady stream. Local sponsorship programs would help Slavic immigrants like Adrian and Dmitri migrate to the United States to escape religious persecution. In 1995, Adrian immigrated at thirty-six, and his transition into American society proceeded relatively smoothly. All other participants or their families had similar transnational connections to Adrian. Most of them had family members who migrated to the United States before them and used their church ties to facilitate migration. Participants recalled choosing or being placed in locations with other family members or an environment determined to be suitable. For most of them, church sponsorship programs became a defacto resettlement agency.

During Adrian's arrival phase, local church networks helped connect him with Russian and American church communities. It was hard for Adrian to distinguish who

was a "real Christian" and who was not in the United States. He explained how Christians in Russia could be recognized by their appearance and lifestyle. To his disappointment, Christians in the United States were much like everyone else. The variety and number of churches also bothered Adrian. To him, Christians appear less unified and homogenous than his image and experiences in Russia. At the church Adrian attended, he was able to socialize with both Russians and Americans. Fortunately for Adrian, Spokane was transnationally connected with his home city and its people, causing many immigrants originating from there to migrate to Spokane. Adrian then had familiar people to socialize with from his hometown, which aided his adjustment and made the transition smoother.

Other participants told how the sponsorship programs would also help them connect to local non-church communities of Slavs, Slavic immigrants, and Americans. Slavic immigrants then had the opportunity to engage with American networks or stay in more familiar Slavic networks. However, English proficiency restricted their engagement with Americans. Some immigrants embraced their social change, while some participants described how others would insist on remailing solely in Slavic social circles. For example, Adrian welcomed the culture change. He saw that his condition in Russia was not conducive for him and was ready to participate in the new lifestyle and economic system the United States had to offer. However, he also noted that some were unwilling to embrace change and lived stagnant depressing lives.

Adrian and other interviewees talked favorably about their treatment and perceptions in the United States. Christian immigrants were received positively and had many services to help them translate and adapt. Often, churches help Christian immigrants socially and economically adjust to their new environments (Hirschman

2004). One participant called Luka, a male in his early 20s who was once Restorationist Christian, told how his church helped him move and provided his family with household furniture upon their arrival. Adrian appreciated that people swore less in Spokane and did not dislike him for being Christian. This attitude change favored him as his Christian status negatively affected his social standing and economic mobility in Russia.

Being Christian also helped foster a sense of solidarity between Slavic-Christian immigrants and local Christians who settled in the region. Having solidarity offered them the potential for deeper and more trusting relationships between the two groups and provided services to immigrants that may be otherwise inaccessible. For example, churches like Calvary Spokane offered translation services, while other churches offered classes in both English and Russian for immigrants and their families. Feelings of solidarity through religion then provide more opportunity for new migrants in employment, whether through the church, American networks, or Slavic networks. Overall, being Christian in Spokane had many benefits for Slavic Christian immigrants. However, their Slavic status became problematic for some.

4.4. First Christian, Now "Russian?"

Although some informants had positive memories of their initial experiences after migration, Adrian recalled initial discrimination that later faded with time. At the time of his migration, the Cold War had recently ended, and perceptions of Russian immigrants were still influenced by political and cultural events like the Red Scare, as described in the previous chapter. Adrian recalled how he would sometimes hear unspecified accusations and slurs from the locals surrounding him during his early years in Spokane. In another instance, Adrian learned that his son was beaten in first grade because he was

Russian. Adrian commented, "They fight us because we are Russians. We don't fight them because they are English." He then told stories of Russia and how the state and military would say to him that the Americans could bomb and kill him at any time. From this perspective, Adrian understood the American sentiment about Russians and felt it was natural given the Cold War. He then followed by telling how perplexed he was by his Christian-Russian predicament and the feelings of both countries' populations:

> "In Russia, we were hated for being Christians. When we came here, we were hated sometimes for being Russian. We thought it would be better if they hated us for being Christians, not for being Russians. In Russia, they considered us secondhand people … they would say kind of mentally ill people. But when we came here, they blame us for what government did, but we had no control and no influence, and we did not participate with what government did. They were against us practically in Russia."

During the time of the interviews, most participants did not dwell on overt or covert discrimination, though their resettlement experiences were tainted with unfavorable encounters. Some said they had never experienced discrimination, such as Ivan, a twenty-nine-year-old male Russian Christian, and Stefan, a thirty-two-year-old male Ukrainian Christian. Ivan discussed what it meant to be Slavic in the area. He mentioned that people "think we are all Vodka drinking guys," but overall did not feel much of an issue with perceptions or stereotypes of Slavic immigrants. Other participants shared how they did experience discrimination, such as Zasha, a thirty-four-year-old female Ukrainian Christian, and Luka.

Zasha recounted that when she was ten years old and first in America, she would hear "go back to your country" from other children. She then described how she no longer heard such comments anymore. We then talked about cultural narratives

surrounding Eastern Europeans and Slavic peoples. Zasha said she felt they were portrayed negatively in politics and media because Americans "need to put blame on someone." In response to this, she rolled her eyes. Generally speaking, she said that such childhood experiences and narratives did not affect her.

Luka explained to me how perceived discrimination manifested itself into self-consciousness. He said that his lack of English proficiency was apparent at a younger age. Not being able to speak English well made him feel very different. While in school, Luka said he felt his teachers would not like him due to their political views. When people replied unenthusiastically, "Oh," after learning he was Russian, he said it also made him feel othered and lonely. Luka followed by saying. "I felt loneliness because I chose to single myself out, but I also felt tension- that I was not welcome due to being different." Luka then described his relationship with an old employer. At the time, Luka's employer knew how to speak Russian, but Luka would not let him know he was Russian. He recalled how he chose not to tell his employer because he knew it could cause him to feel lonely. Having already established an English connection, he felt no need to reveal any more of himself.

Luka also shared how cultural and political narratives impact his feelings of belonging. Historically, the Red Scare initiated narratives that described Soviet peoples as threatening to the United States. These views then caused discrimination against Slavic Americans (Library of Congress n.d.). Though they have changed over time, harmful narratives like the ones stemming from the Red Scare were still present in contemporary American political and cultural discourse. More recently, in the 2016 and 2020 United States presidential elections, political narratives surrounding Russian and Ukrainian

uncouth practices regarding United States politics have circulated in the public sphere (Barnes 2019; Duehren and Volz 2020). Other examples were seen in movies, where many action-based flicks have Russians as the main enemy. Also, Russians were often portrayed as the enemy in the video game industry and have been scapegoated for various questionable United States military practices in the Middle East (Wilde 2019). Such narratives and representation painted Russians, Ukrainians, and other Slavic immigrants as antithetical to the United States and its democratic republic system.

Luka described being Slavic as "a disadvantage" because of the history between the United States and Russia. He also told how his people felt that they would be met with hate or looked at differently when they got to America. He said that these feelings were internalized and experienced by many others. However, Luka's perspective had changed dramatically over the years, and he told how he believed being Russian was his "superpower." He recalled an experience that changed his perception as so.

> "It was a group of people … some Mexican friends, Natives … they always pushed my comfort button by telling me, 'what's up you're Russian,' which used to bother me throughout my whole life … They established … 'we're Native, we're Mexican, be proud of who you are.' Being in that group and setting with people I can communicate with … gave me an eye-opening piece of being proud of your culture … I needed to hear that."

Luka described how he was inspired by the pride that his ethnically Native American and Mexican friends had in their cultures. He was then motivated to be proud of his Russian heritage.

Other participants had little to say about their feelings on this topic. It may be that only some experienced discrimination and others did not, or perhaps some experienced discrimination in a way where they perceived it as such while others did not. There were

also other factors to consider when discussing a deep and personal emotion like loneliness, such as eves dropping and gossip. Some participants described Slavs as being more emotionally reserved, which may have also factored into their responses. Limitations of the rapport-building process and my Russian language deficiency could have promoted a lack of trust.

It appeared that despite having Christian solidarity, some participants experienced perceived discrimination when they arrived in the United States. Perceived discrimination refers to an individual's feeling of being discriminated against, independent of others' viewpoints. While its definition is simple, perceived discrimination influences an immigrant's experience of coming to a new country greatly. Usually, perceived discrimination negatively impacted one's mental health (Suh et al. 2019), and higher feelings of perceived discrimination were related to worsened mental health (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012). A worsened state of mental health then made one more vulnerable to loneliness. Perceived discrimination was also an indicator that an immigrant was not adapting well to their new environment (Neto 2019). Maladaptation caused mental stressors and feelings of unbelonging and indicated a potential for loneliness.

There are many forms of discrimination, with some being more apparent while others are more subtle. Examples of discrimination that immigrants could have faced were anti-immigrant policies (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012), microaggressions (Suh et al. 2019), stereotypes, and blatant racism as well as ethnocentrism. In the case of perceived discrimination, neither was more or less impactful; instead, it was up to the individual to determine how much the discrimination affected them. Despite its individual aspect, some groups were far more likely to be discriminated against and prone to perceiving and

internalizing discriminatory effects. White immigrants, in particular, were least likely to experience discrimination (Suh et al. 2019) but still could feel discrimination in context-specific circumstances. As its perception was key, perceived discrimination was hard to measure and compare but helped ascertain an immigrant's potential for feelings of loneliness.

For Slavic participants interviewed, the United States had immigration policies that promoted their migration, thus minimizing discrimination in that realm. The participants also appeared similar to Spokane's majority Caucasian population, which may have caused them to not experience racism in ways that other immigrants with more different ethnic backgrounds might. Communist historical tensions did affect some of the participants, but most of their experiences were temporary and ceased with increased duration of stay and older age. Luka's comments made me wonder if there were occurrences and effects of discrimination in this population, though perhaps the difference in perception mediated any harmful experiences.

4.5. Living and Aging in a New Land

Adrian told how after passing through his initial transition into Spokane, he embraced assimilation and began engaging with social structures like college and church to build his various forms of capital. For instance, Adrian no longer wished to work in a factory and enrolled at a local University. At college, Adrian earned a degree that allowed him to work in the healthcare sector. As his duration of stay increased in Spokane, Adrian became more rooted in American culture while only maintaining some of the Russian cultural practices.

Initially, Adrian had attended a predominantly Russian church. He later moved to a less Russian and more Western church. Many Slavic immigrants were present here, but it was not specifically a Slavic or Russian church. Adrian wanted to embrace the American way of life. I thought his approach to assimilation was compelling and asked about how loneliness is involved in the adjustment process. As a trained social scientist, he answered as follows.

> "You know the grieving process? There are different models, but they look similar. So first, when we come, we experience shock; culture shock. Then we go through denial. The next step is anger … Then, it is bargaining. And then- the model I follow, then you accept the change or loss, you go down to depression. You might stay there for some time … until this information goes to long-term memory. So it might take some time … Then when you're done with depression, when it goes to long-term memory, you go up to recovery, and practically you go higher than where you started; where you were when you got this shock. So it's kind of in order to grow to get higher … What I see with my culture is not many guys who got through it. Most of the guys stayed with the same culture, so they did not get through it."

Shortly after, Adrian told how some people he knew chose not to adapt to American culture. In his view, this was harmful to their growth because they were in a new land and were obligated to learn the new culture. He thought one would become much more successful if they embraced the change and relinquished many of their old customs. Adrian described his experience of adapting.

> "Well, I already got … I think not just assimilated; I feel I got accommodated. The difference I see between these two terms … assimilation is when I come to new culture, and I learn about new culture, but I still live by my own. Accommodation is when I start living by this new culture. That's where I see myself now."

Due to his transition between assimilation and accommodation, he became much more a part of the American culture and felt that his home was more so in Spokane.

Despite his relative ease and understanding of the transition process, Adrian still admitted that he sometimes felt lonely because of his difference in experiences and cultural background. Fortunately for Adrian, he took this approach early, so when he was further into his duration of stay, he was less lonely than others who did not and those who were less successful adapting with long durations of stay.

An immigrant's duration of stay has profound effects on their relative loneliness. The longer an immigrant is in their new country, the more adapted and adept at the culture they become (Neto 2019). Feeling well-versed and integrated into a surrounding culture helps ward off loneliness. Often it can take some time to learn these things, and it can be challenging for immigrants to make friends with locals outside of ethnic communities. Local connections are important because they allow the immigrant to access new resources and information. They can then use this to their advantage and become more proficient in navigating their new social scape.

Closely tied to an immigrant's duration of stay is the age at which they moved to the new country. The younger they migrate, the longer their duration of stay will be, and the more adapted they will be in adulthood. Longer durations then decrease the likelihood of becoming lonely in the long term, as immigrants become more rooted in their new society and culture (Treas and Mazumdar 2002). Deep roots allow many opportunities to increase one's socioeconomic stand and expand their networks, which help substantially prevent loneliness. Many Slavic immigrants came into communities established multiple generations prior to their arrival. In the case of Adrian, his sister migrated to Spokane before him and relocated to Spokane because of the long-standing Slavic population and church networks.

Many participants came to the United States when they were younger. Those on the younger end of the spectrum were better adjusted and integrated into American culture. Almost all participants who came below the age of ten claimed that they did not often experience loneliness. Ivan, who migrated to Spokane when he was three, stated that he practically lived here his whole life and felt very well adapted. Zasha, who relocated to Spokane when she was ten, said she did not often feel lonely. When she did, she would visit her family for nostalgia. Stefan, who also migrated at age ten, said that he did not feel lonely and adapted well. This attitude was typical among participants who arrived under ten and had lived in Spokane since. During migration, the younger an immigrant was, the more acculturated they typically became (Cheung et al. 2011).

Most participants said that if they felt lonely, they were well-versed enough in both American and Russian or Ukrainian communities to easily open and exchange with someone who could offset this, usually by reminiscing or sharing cultural food. Often, the younger immigrants had family in the surrounding area, which allowed them to visit their family whenever loneliness emerged. Most immigrants who came at younger ages also perceived their social networks to be satisfying, whether they were a part of the Russian community, American community, church community, or all. However, these sentiments were not experienced by all.

Viktor, a Ukrainian Christian male in his 30s, had moved from Ukraine to Spokane. He remembered how he was initially homesick and missed his country and family. After being here for some time, Spokane became his home, and these feelings lessened. He then moved from Spokane to Los Angeles, California, for six years to be with a friend to "try out a different scene." He tried to pursue a career in entertainment

but eventually moved back to Spokane because his career goals were not coming to fruition, he missed his family, and Spokane felt more like home. His experiences and way of talking about his current situation indicated that he was experiencing loneliness. This was most likely because he did not remain in one area long enough to develop or maintain a long-lasting and stable social network.

Luka had an entirely different experience with his duration of stay. When he initially came at the age of nine, the language barriers caused him difficulty adapting. He recognized that he was different and spent time learning the English language. As he became more proficient with English, he stopped telling people that he was Russian to fit in more. He would not begin telling other non-Russians that he was Russian until a period in his life. As he stayed longer, he became more Americanized, which had adverse effects on interactions with Spokane's Slavic community.

Luka explained how Russians would begin speaking to him in English because he and his friends embraced more American apparel. He said he would reply in Russian and that they would often be surprised. In other circumstances, Luka described how Russians would talk bad about him in Russian, not knowing that Russian was his native tongue. In this instance, Luka's duration of stay helped him adapt to American society more but harmed his connection with Spokane's Slavic community. However, some of these issues have dissipated with time, self-discovery and maturation, as reflected in Luka's story about coming to terms with his Russian ethnicity.

All older research participants claimed that they experienced loneliness when they first moved to America. Despite Masha having been in Spokane for seventeen years, she still had feelings of loneliness. She claimed that she missed her sister and other family

members, who had stayed in Ukraine while her other brothers and sisters migrated to Spokane. While she missed her family, she made a point to note that she did not miss her country. Masha's husband, Dmitri, recalls instances of loneliness when he first came to America. He missed his friends and relatives in Russia. Dmitri said his past feelings subsided as he grew roots in Spokane and his children formed their own families.

Some loneliness emerged but was offset by communication with immigrants like them and network participation. It was clear that the longer the duration of stay an immigrant had, the less lonely they felt if they could find a community to immerse themselves in. This relationship would often arise because, as participants became more involved with their communities and established independent lives, their identities began to include, or predominantly change to, American. While some asserted that they were Russian American or Ukrainian American, the self-prescribed American label indicated their multifaceted identity.

With Viktor, it seemed his lack of long-standing relationships had caused him to experience loneliness, despite being in American for many years. Though he was fluent in Russian, he felt that he was different from his peers due to his life choices that deviated from the Slavic community's norm. Having been unable to form long-term connections in American communities, he found himself partially in both communities but not deeply connected in either.

At the time of the interview, Adrian was in his 60s and had lived in the United States for a quarter of a century. As he grew older and embraced American cultural ethos, he seemed to have gotten used to being American. He stopped frequenting stores with Slavic goods and, for the most part, felt like other locals. Occasionally his home city

would cross his mind, but he had no desire to return. He still kept in contact with some family and a few people in Russia, but his life was now in America.

Among the most vulnerable to loneliness are the elderly and immigrants (Kim 1999). Older adults and elders face many challenges as they age, making them susceptible to loneliness (Wegner et al. 1996). With the institutionalization of caring for the elderly in Western societies, they are often displaced from their homes and placed into care facilities. In these facilities, social networks are limited, and family time is typically seldom. These circumstances then expose them to both emotional and social loneliness. Mobility and death serve as social limiters for those not in facilities and foster loneliness as the aging process continues. While some older people have a family to rely on, Western society's individualistic nature emphasizes personal development and performance and discourages collective care. This cultural value causes the elderly's children and grandchildren to neglect them to pursue their social and economic ambitions. As the elderly are arguably already in declining health, loneliness is hazardous for them.

When many elders immigrate, their new conditions can become problematic. There may be inconsistencies between what an elderly immigrant expects and their newfound reality. In the United States, the elderly are often excluded from social activities and stay in their homes. For example, it is common for the elderly in the United States to be placed into retirement facilities. There they will be socially and spatially separated from their family, friends, and younger generations. This exclusion is not solely relegated to the native population and can also be seen in immigrant communities and organizations (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015). Such a change in social dynamics could

result in loneliness. When isolation and exclusion occur, the elderly's expectations of maintaining their former social status and role are no longer possible. Within the home sphere, elderly immigrants are often expected to reside with family members and assist in taking care of the home. Their role change can cause loneliness as it is incongruent with their status and expectations prior to migration.

During an interview with another participant called Katya, an early thirties female Russian Christian, she recalled an experience about an older Russian woman looking to develop a relationship with another Russian-speaking woman. Katya told how her pastor had a son who started a church plant in a small Idaho town. The town was relatively isolated and without a sizeable Slavic community. Cultural networks were seldom. The pastor's son met a Russian family in that town who had a widowed mother lacking Russian-speaking friends and community. He then reached out to Katya.

The pastor's son had explained the person found would not have to meet with the lonely woman in person and could talk over the phone about general topics. He described to Katya how the woman was living with her single son and his children. Despite this, she was lonely because she could not speak English and wanted a friend who could. The pastor's son asked Katya if she knew any Russian-speaking women who could incorporate this lonely woman into their lives. Katya responded by saying that she did not know any Russian women in her social circle who fulfill his request. Although, she stated that she would pass on the message to a woman's minister at her old Russian church. Her old church likely had Russian-speaking women who could establish a relationship.

The narrative above highlighted how age and loneliness are related. Older immigrants can often find it difficult to learn new languages. If widowed, it can also be

challenging to make new friends. The older woman in Katya's story did not have a social network outside of her familial one. She was relegated to caring for her single son and his children. Overall, she appeared to be unsatisfied with her circumstances. Despite not being socially isolated, the lonely woman's predicament demonstrates how unfulfilling social situations can promote loneliness.

Generally, older participants seemed physically healthy with high subjective well-being. They usually told how they liked their lives and always looked for work or something to keep them active. From what I could gather from observation, the older immigrants often lived in family units and were happy to work, whether for pay or at home. Many would gather and partake in traditional activities like going to saunas, markets, or farms to pick fresh produce. The Slavic community seemed to prize physical activity. Most of the elders I saw who appeared to be in poor physical condition often had other ailments. These people could still be seen at church on Sunday, as their families would bring them in and sit with them in the pews or handicap-accessible areas.

Some older participants I had spoken to described how they felt lonely and missed their culture at times. Masha, a female Ukrainian Christian in her 50s, shared how she frequently felt lonely. She missed her family, who stayed in Ukraine and had not lived in America as long as others. Adrian told how he occasionally felt lonely because he had a different upbringing from his American coworkers and friends. The experiences of older immigrants I interviewed were not the same as those of other groups in the literature. Instead, having had the center of their community gravitate around church fostered an environment where immigrants of all ages could come and interact with multi-generational members of their community as well as American communities. Among

participants, age did not seem to be a prominent indicator of loneliness. It was in line with Ponizovsky and Ritner's (2004) findings that age and loneliness were not correlated.

4.6. Fulfilling Expectations

The participants' motivation for migration and their experiences resettling had a relationship. One reason many had chosen to migrate was because of religious persecution. After migration, it seemed their social standing increased. Christians were looked at more favorably in the United States than in their home country. Some recalled how they experienced alienation when they first arrived but felt like they belonged after some time. Another reason many participants came was for economic concerns. After migration, participants' actual and potential financial status improved as well.

Almost all participants had a healthy socioeconomic status and were content. They all remembered how they came from either a lower class or lower-middle-class living situation. According to them, no social standing was associated with professions due to how the job market in communist and post-communist countries worked. Some participants came from lower economic statuses than others, but most of their conditions rose considerably upon settling in the United States. For those who migrated here before having a job, most were able to find or create businesses that have led them to live a relatively economically stable life.

Adrian told how he quit schooling early to learn a trade. After learning, he became a factory worker and was later drafted into the Russian army. While working in Russia, he made enough to get by, but his condition improved greatly after moving to the United States and becoming a healthcare worker. Katya had also done well with

employment though she brought up an interesting point about the idea of one's potential socioeconomic status when moving to the United States. She told how there was an "illusion" that one would be "super-wealthy" once they came to the United States. To their surprise, Slavic immigrants would resettle only to realize that they were still living paycheck to paycheck in many cases.

Ivan was born in a rural town in Russia that he described as a "small hillbilly town in the woods." His father was a coal miner, and his mother was a building painter. Together, they were unsatisfied with their conditions. Ivan recalled how residents of his hometown had low education levels because they would opt out of school for low-paying jobs. Ivan explained that you had to have connections to get a good job. With no connections, there were no opportunities. Ivan described how his family had no ties to anyone influential and saw little prospect in his town. After moving to the United States, his family developed connections and improved their socioeconomic circumstances, becoming middle class. Ivan jubilantly shared how he would follow his dream of owning a small business. He proclaimed that his new conditions made him very happy with life.

Before Dmitri moved to the United States, he was a tradesman and was paid considerably less than he had been in the United States. In Ukraine, Masha shared how she was a state quality inspector and was paid about the same as a janitor. In Spokane, she worked with garments and lived with Dmitri in a charming home. Dmitri and his family elaborated on how their pay system worked. Those who were paid more could afford to buy a bit more meat, and that was the extent of their benefits. Dmitri's son Lazar owned his own business in the pool industry and seemed economically comfortable. He lived with his stay-at-home wife Annika, who raised their children. In

Russia, their family would not have had the opportunity to follow their economic endeavors and live a successful life with leisure time.

Zasha had a promising career and appeared financially stable. Stefan pursued a career in philanthropy, where he seemed to be comfortable as well. Luka's family became involved in the medical field. However, Luka had a child in high school, causing him to drop out of school. After some time, he returned to school, got his General Education Development degree, and finished his General Associates of Arts degree. He then planned to continue onto a nursing program and one day become a motivational speaker.

At the time of Viktor's interview, he received a new job and lived with his family while establishing himself further in Spokane. Viktor mentioned how a lack of a career harmed his self-esteem. Despite him believing his conditions were better in Spokane than they would have been in Ukraine, he did not meet standards set by other community members. Generally, socioeconomic status did not worsen for any participant who moved to Spokane. Not one individual reported living in a lower-class condition, and though finances were not discussed in-depth, none made mention of any fiscal struggles. Instead, when one's status did not match or exceed other community members, it affected feelings of belonging and loneliness.

In Adrian's case, he successfully moved to the United States and established himself within multiple social networks. While doing so, he fostered a sense of belonging and practiced his religion free from consequence. With his newfound opportunities, he went to college and obtained a degree in social science that allowed him to secure a lifestyle for his family. Adrian had adapted well and utilized resources in his social

networks to improve his conditions considerably, despite some setbacks from the negative sentiments of Americans after his arrival.

4.7. Gender and Gender Relations Post-Resettlement

Participants shared stories about different aspects of their lives after migration. Particularly relevant here are marital status and gender dynamics. Marital status was said to be the single most important safeguard against loneliness (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015). Friends and other family members may be seldom available in an immigrant's new country of residence, so having a spouse was of significant value. A spouse was often someone who could be confided in and provided security. Couples were likely to have a meaningful relationship and be supportive in many ways. This support system was crucial because it was very likely to exist and was mutually beneficial. Being married also brought the possibility of children, who also acted as a substantial shield from loneliness (Iecovich et al. 2004). If a spouse became widowed, their likelihood of developing loneliness increased significantly (Treas and Mazumdar 2002).

Participants described marriage in their community as being more traditionally oriented. Katya told how many married Slavic women typically assumed the role of child caregiver and would stay home to raise their children while their husbands were at work. Two other participants, Lazar, a male Russian Christian in his late twenties, and Annika, a female Ukrainian Christian in her mid-twenties, were married with a child. Their relationship reflected more traditional values where Annika had become a stay-at-home mother after the birth of their daughter.

Having a spouse also increased opportunities to expand and maintain social networks. Through the mutual connection of marriage, both parties had the potential to have access to their spouse's social network. If members of a partner's network required help, they could call upon their spouse to fulfill their social obligation, further strengthening their ties to their friends and each other. Partners could also use their network connections to expand their economic and social opportunities by accessing more information about the surrounding environment. If one partner's work was too demanding and hindered their ability to learn their new local customs, the spouse could inform the working partner of what they know and increase their partner's sense of belonging.

Marital status affected my population in less apparent ways. Most of the participants were married. Four of them were single. Those who were married claimed that they did not experience loneliness because they socialized with their families and others. Zasha was one of the single participants. She indicated slight loneliness from homesickness rather than single status. Another single female participant named Eva, an eighteen-year-old female Ukrainian Christian said that she did not feel lonely. Most likely, this was because she was only eighteen, and marital status did not matter as much. She also had many friends. Viktor was also single and told how he did not have many close connections to people other than family or friends in other states. Luka was single and felt lonely at times but did not indicate that being single was an influencer. As Luka was in his early twenties, it seemed he was more focused on personal development, caring for his child, and socializing with friends than looking for a spouse.

In Katya's story about the older widowed Russian woman in Idaho, her son and grandchildren were not enough to assuage her loneliness. Instead, she began seeking out new connections to Russian women. There was little chance of finding a husband at her age, so she opted for friendship. In the case of Dmitri, he was not lonely once he had a family. Dmitri was married to Masha, but Masha was his second wife. Lazar, son of Dmitri, told how his mother had passed away from cancer a few years earlier and that his father had recently married Masha. Given Masha's age and her experience with loneliness after migration, combined with Dmitri's loss, their marriage appeared mutually beneficial. Perhaps because Dmitri remarried and Masha became married, both could prevent loneliness from manifesting or further developing.

In the instance of Katya, who intentionally rejected being a member of the Slavic community, she relied more on her American community and husband's friend group to fulfill her social and familial needs. She told stories of how she had fun with her husband's father, joking around, and how she had her own friends from work and church. Annika, the wife of Lazar, also shared in Lazar's network and spent time with Lazar's family. They would do activities and go over for celebrations and other events. Katya chose not to follow the norm for married Slavic women and continued to progress her career. While raising their children at home, access to the husband's social circle and her non-Slavic friend groups prevented loneliness and allowed more socializing opportunities. Closely related to marital status are gender and gender roles.

Gender was a known predictor of loneliness (Iecovich et al. 2004). When a single woman migrates, additional challenges arise for her. In Hellermann's (2006) work, she found that single Eastern European women migrating to Western Europe faced many

social stigmas and were often taken advantage of by members of their ethnic communities in their new host countries. Unless they had a robust economic or social support system in their country of origin with connections to their new destination, they were at a heightened risk of being exploited. Exploitation then caused their expectations not to be fulfilled and for them to spend time working to pay off their burdensome debts (Hellermann 2006). While this may reign true if the woman migrated alone, I did not experience this in my research. A limitation of my experience was that immigrants were often sponsored by a church and came with their families.

When married women immigrate, their social roles may drastically change. In Slavic culture, women were seen as caretakers as described by participants. Their duties usually concern the home and the welfare of their families. In the United States, it was common for a household to need two incomes to obtain higher economic status and security. When relocating to the United States, traditional homemakers may be required to enter the job market. This role change was problematic for some women as it often did not alleviate traditional responsibilities. An increased burden was then added to their rigorous familial expectations obligations. If an elder were present, some duties like childcare and other chores could be allocated to them. If an elder were not present, some women would have to perform their traditional roles and their new economic ones. Not living up to their gender roles and expectations caused many immigrant women to experience loneliness (Ahmad et al. 2005). However, this could also be applied to men. Married women also risk becoming widowed, which had been found to create feelings of insecurity and loneliness (Aartsen and Jylha 2011; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015). This was demonstrated in Katya's story of the older widowed and lonely Russian woman.

While the gender differences were not as harmful as some literature might present, they played a role in participants' interaction with the Slavic community. Traditional gender roles in the Slavic community provide a model for its members to follow. Their level of engagement depended on the gender roles they wanted to embody. However, if a member chose not to follow them, they were less likely to be engaged in the Russian community and were sometimes ostracized.

Katya provided unique insight into how gender affected a member's experience in the Russian community. She explained how many women gossiped and men were less emotional. Both usually did not talk about their feelings and were almost impenetrable. She noticed some people were unwilling to express their emotional states, even after experiencing traumatic events. A sister might be someone speak with, but Katya said unless you were willing to have everyone know everything about you, most emotional issues were kept secret.

Traditional gender roles were not appealing for Katya. She told me she did not want to stay at home and do all of the work while the husband came home and complained about it. Katya said the appealing part of American culture was the increased sense of egalitarianism that she had. She married an American. However, this presented a new set of obstacles. When she was dating and looking to marry her American husband, Russian gender norms like directness and pragmatism caused miscommunication. Katya remembered how she and her husband had to talk about their differences in attitudes and expectations. She had to reaffirm to him that she was not trying to be cold or rude. Though, together they worked past these differences.

Katya described how she was not lonely because she distanced herself from the Slavic community to protect her emotions. In exchange, she opted for an American social circle. Had she remained deeply integrated with the Slavic community, feelings of loneliness were primed for development. Katya told stories like:

> "I remember my dad told me … something along the lines of how … I should act so that- this was back when I was a teenager, to be helpful, act in a way they'll make a man see you and want to marry you. And in the Russian culture, typically, the woman cleans the house, cooks, cleans child-rearing, and the man comes home from work and yells at everybody, 'why's the house messy?' You know, it's kind of the toll … that's why I didn't want to marry a Russian is, I don't want to repeat the cycle, and when I look at American culture, what I see is like 'okay, it's kind of even' so, you both work, and hopefully you both clean … Obviously you gotta talk about before you marry anybody, but yeah. There's definitely a double standard with being a woman, versus a guy in a home, because … even with cars for instance, 'oh, you're a girl like you're dumb you won't know anything,' but with guys, it's like 'oh, you can learn to do your own oil change you don't need to ask anybody how to do it,' and so there's that sexist aspect. I would say, there was also just dumb things … my dad, I told him I wanted to play the saxophone, and he said, 'oh, well you need big lungs for that …' and, you don't. I played the Alto sax in school, and I was fine, and so it's just kind of funny."

Experiences like this bothered her, and she took issue with the ways other Russians would treat each other in social scenarios. These practices contributed to her decision to reject the Slavic community and her attitude towards keeping her children separated from it as well.

Eva, the youngest participant, described how she did not like the gender roles either. She told me how there was pressure to find a boyfriend and get married, but she wanted to go to university and find a career. As America is a country where these opportunities are more available, she tried to capitalize on this.

Another perspective on the role gender has in the Slavic community comes from Viktor. Unlike Katya and Eva, Viktor was male. When I talked to Viktor about his experiences in the Slavic community, he described it as follows:

> "I kind of feel a little bit like a black sheep sometimes, like I didn't follow, you know, lots of Russians. They would marry young … when they're in their 20s and stuff, and … get jobs starting out and eventually look at a house, and I'm just kind of like, just wandering around. I didn't really develop- yeah. I'm still single and stuff, you know, I don't have like a job, skill, or job, so I feel like I would be disconnected from most Russians. Kind of like 'cause they try to get in early, try to get a job, you know, married early and stuff … So yeah, that's where I feel like I'd be disconnected, just two different worlds."

Viktor later explained he did not want to share his feelings when he felt lonely. He described how emotions were to be disciplined and that he could not talk about them, making him seem weak or too dependent on others. While he could discuss these feelings with his siblings, he was hesitant because it might shape others' perceptions of him.

Another notable moment with Viktor happened when a church member walked up and said, "Thank you for cutting your hair. It was atrocious," and Viktor laughed and replied, "good words." This dynamic almost seemed maternal to me. I did not get a good look at the woman who said this, but upon reflection of the interview recording, it seemed like an attempt at positive reinforcement for the typical short hair gender norm. In a later interview, Luka had commented that if Russians had long hair or tattoos, they were looked down upon in their communities. Luka's comment appeared relevant because Viktor had some longer hair that had recently been cut. His church community was validating this change to promote further conformity, perhaps. Due to Viktor choosing to take a different approach to life in America, he found it harder to connect

with other Russian men his age, which would indicate the potential for loneliness to develop.

In a different scenario, I was chatting with a group of people and saw that one looked out of place. His physical appearance differed from the norm of short clean-cut hair and good physical shape, and he seemed ostracized from the community. I asked him he wanted to be interviewed, and he declined. In this community, the more one conforms, the easier they can utilize their networks and prevent loneliness. When they diverged from expectations, they became marginalized within their community. However, the community had active efforts to bring them back in and guide them. Participants told how deviant behavior was believed to stem from more liberal ideologies pervasive in American culture and Washington State. There was a widespread sentiment among the community I worked with that such beliefs and practices eroded Slavic and American values, creating weaker people.

From the data I gathered, women had more challenges moving towards working roles and expressing their feelings. Social pressures to have women be housewives and gossip created these obstacles. Though, some women embraced being a housewife. Since the Slavic community has been perceived as one that could not be trusted with secrets, many feelings were left bottled up and unaddressed, promoting loneliness. However, this sentiment was not experienced by most participants.

Gender roles also positively influenced coping with loneliness. In an example that Zasha gave, she told how her mother taught her to cook foods like Borsch and Golubsti. Passing on traditional recipes allowed Zasha to connect with her cultural roots. At Russian and Ukrainian stores like Kiev Market, embroidery kits, dresses, scarfs, and

other cultural crafts were for sale. The community had resources to pass along traditional practices from parent to child. On Easter Sunday at the Calvary Spokane, many Slavic children came in traditional regalia that appeared to be handmade. Traditions like these provide a tangible way for members of the community to connect to their heritage and with each other.

For men, most traditions were passed down through practices and oration. Viktor was looking for an older Russian man to act as a mentor and guide him in life. Lazar and Dmitri mentioned how they would go to the saunas together and participate in temperature shock. Though Luka did not go with Russians specifically, participation in YMCA saunas also offered him a place to socialize with his friends and other American community members. Slavic community members can interact with their cultural roots by learning and participating in traditions passed through their families.

4.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed how participants' context of reception, socioeconomic status, perceived discrimination, duration of stay, age, marital status, and gender affected loneliness. I described how variables intersected with each other and caused participants to have divergent experiences because of them. The effects of the elements will tie into chapter five, where I expand on how different factors combined with those listed in this chapter shaped Spokane's first-generation immigrants' experiences of loneliness and how they overcame it.

Chapter Five

Slavic Social Networks and their Relationship to Overcoming Loneliness

5.1. Introduction

This chapter analyzes how participants interact with their friends and ethnic groups. In the previous chapter, I discussed differing sociometric variables and how they influenced loneliness. This chapter relates how such variables affect ones' social life dynamics. Participants' narratives indicate their social circles and how they were relevant to their lives. Informants were not overly effusive. They pointed out various issues in their networks and how that has affected them. Ultimately this chapter argues how reconstructed Slavic social relationships help keep loneliness at bay and assist coping methods for those who experience loneliness. I show the different approaches participants have taken with their involvement in Slavic and American life as well as their perceptions of them. Information on social networks varied depending on the information provided by the participants and the length they had available to interview. Each member had a different experience with the Slavic and American peer groups and had differing views. After discussing their social network usage, I then discuss how Spokane's Slavic social ties are generally related to loneliness, how other factors have contributed to the efficacy of the networks, and what allows the networks to thrive. I then end by discussing the Slavic-Christian identity that has appeared as a common factor across participants.

5.2. Spokane's Slavic Network

Spokane's Slavic networks were deeply interconnected and attuned with Christian and American social groups. Typically, they centered around Spokane's many Russian churches. Spokane's emphasis on taking Slavic immigrants and refugees who experienced religious persecution caused many Slavic immigrants to have Christian church affiliations. In almost all of the participants' interviews, a church with Russian influence played a significant role in adjusting to a new area. Participants' experiences transitioning were generally smooth. As with most social networks, there were some advantages and disadvantages to immersion. I used four case studies to illustrate participants' variability of experiences.

5.2.1. Reaching Out

Adrian, who is in his early 60s, characterized his web of social relationships as being limited. He anchored himself to his home, church, and place of employment. Often depicting himself and a devout Christian, he disapproved of what he described as the life of non-believers. His self-presentation limited his potential for connections with non-Christians. Though, it was not problematic. Adrian stated, "my relationship with God makes me not feel lonely." Adrian has some Russian and American friends, and they were all connected to his church or work. Within his friend groups, there were also differences in his friendships.

Distinctions between Adrian's Russian and American friends abounded. He characterized his Russian friendships as more intimate. Adrian seemed to relish visiting his Russian friends, saying, "with Russians, I can go to their homes. They can come to

me. It's … practically different culture." He contrasted this with his American friends, who primarily socialize at work or church exclusively. At work with American colleagues, he recalled, "I feel like I have something different. I don't have the same experiences as these people, even if I have friends there." Adrian's feelings towards his friendships indicated that his Russian network was much more useful in expressive functioning, i.e., emotional support. They contained a more profound and personal connection with higher degrees of solidarity than his friendships with American coworkers in the same profession. When surrounded by Americans, Adrian recalled how it could sometimes cause him to feel different and lead to feelings of loneliness.

Adrian reminisced how he participated in other parts of the Slavic community by shopping at Russian businesses when he was younger. When Adrian felt homesick, he would go to Russian stores and buy their food. As he got more integrated within the American lifestyle, he went to Russian stores less. Recently, he had only purchased bread and sour cream from Russian stores because they were more to his taste. Despite experiencing some homesickness and loneliness due to a lack of shared experienced, Adrian's involvement with his church community and faith helped him prevent and cope with those feelings tremendously.

Adrian said he would feel like an outsider if he were still in Russia because he was Christian and more accustomed to American life. Though, he held on to some Russian culture elements (predominantly Russian Christians' approach to Christianity) while embracing local ways of life. Adrian even expressed issues with others who held onto the culture too much. "I felt uncomfortable to be in Russian culture, with people who do not want to change, and just stay with the same … we moved here, and we live in

different environments, so we need to adjust to this." He further elaborated how those stuck in the grieving process would not escape it and remained stagnant compared to where they could be if they were more adapted. They were very much like the Amish, he commented.

Adrian had a profound appreciation for the respectful nature of American culture. He noted that people were generally more polite in the United States compared to Russia. American politeness made Adrian feel like he belonged because politeness was aligned with his values. In Russia, he thought people were too vulgar and treated unfairly because of their Christian faith. He was content in America, though he said he wished American Christians were more identifiable not only by appearance but by their actions. From his perspective, Some Christian tenets were taken more seriously in Russia. Russian Christians made substantial efforts to embody Christian conduct described in the Bible. It appeared Adrian felt that some American Christians were less distinguishable from non-Christians. Not everyone failed to meet his expectations, but the commonality of failed expectations was a point of critique. He did not sound judgemental but seemed bothered by the general differences he observed in their behavior. However, his experiences did not harm the acceptance of local American culture.

Adrian, in many ways, represented several Slavic immigrants I interacted with other the past year. Many showed a willingness to adapt while holding onto select aspects of their culture. They were also involved with Russian, Christian, and American social groups. Their approach helped them succeed in adapting to their post-migration environment. Despite not finding the same level of religious fervor in Spokane's American population, they still embraced the American culture and had seldom

complained. Adrian, in particular, described his social ties as being intimate and fulfilling. Overall, participants' experiences and network involvement prevented loneliness.

5.2.2. Slavic Bound

Ivan migrated to the United States when he was three. However faint and distant, he recalled how his Russian church community was all he had ever known and needed. His Slavic Church was his refuge. It was a place to worship, develop and maintain friendships, and feel good. He even met his would-be wife there. Though Ivan initially lived in another city west of Spokane, he smoothly transitioned into Spokane's Russian community. In Spokane, Ivan attended a Russian Baptist Church. The church satisfied his spiritual needs and gave him deep bench friendships. Is also provided Sunday school for his children, which was also beneficial.

Ivan described how his community helped Russians overcome some struggles they had living in the United States. Ivan said, "I think we struggle as Russians, with kids not wanting to speak Russian," and that the children "want to be normal." He explained that it was because speaking Russian was "abnormal" and "weird." His children did not speak Russian at school, and many of their friends did not speak it either. However, at their Sunday school, his children learned to speak Russian and lessons about the culture. Aside from the cultural benefits of having his children there, they also received college credit for their language proficiency. Not only did this aspect of Ivan's network provide instrumental resources for his children, but it provided expressive functions for Ivan, as the Sunday school and ethnic community offered a way for him to maintain his sense of

culture and connection. This service then reaffirmed his identity and role in the community, which was crucial in preventing loneliness from developing.

Ivan's friendship circle was composed mainly of Russian people. He explained in his own words how he had. "no strictly American friends." There were few participants like Ivan. Ivan attributed this to his upbringing and his almost self-sufficient Slavic community. He grew up in a Russian household that was tightknit with other Russian Christian families. Everything he did was Russian, except school, and because of this, he never could make any long-term American friends. Being immersed in the sprawling Slavic community in his other city and Spokane. Ivan seemed satisfied. The Slavic Christian community provided him with a strong sense of solidarity, connections, and engagement. He mentioned the comfort and effectiveness of speaking the same language, the comradery of shared values, and his friends' mutual understandings. It was through the Slavic community that made him feel like he belonged and warded off loneliness.

There were other benefits to being in the Slavic community as well. Ivan secured resources to start his own business using his social network ties. His network provided tangible instrumental uses. Ivan appreciated how his relatives had car haulers and were letting him use them to kickstart a long and short-distance hauling business. From our extensive discussion, it appeared that all social and economic needs could be satisfied within his Slavic-Christian community. Due to these factors, Ivan said that his transition to and life in Spokane has been smooth.

5.2.3. Embracing American Values

Katya was in her earlier thirties and has been in Spokane since she was five. Her case provides a fascinating story because she chose to abstain from participation in Spokane's Slavic network, contrasting many of my informants. Despite this, Katya attended a church with a high concentration of Slavic churchgoers. Katya described how she was well integrated. Her attitude stemmed from her parent's approach to migration, her duration of stay, and her standards for a healthy social network. As an outlier in her relational approaches, her case is important to discuss because it shows another side of how Slavic community members view and interact with the larger social network.

When Katya arrived in Spokane, her family initially attended a Russian church. She remembered how they then started attending both Russian and American churches. Her family was different since many Slavic immigrants spoke Russian in their homes, and her family spoke English primarily. Because of this, she told me how she did not inherit a "Russian accent," as you would see in many other Russian children who spoke Russian at home. She said that she integrated well into American culture because of her language. Unlike other participants like Adrian, she never felt a sense of isolation from American society. Her dependence on the Slavic community was limited. Having grown up both going to Russian and American churches, the difference between her and other community members was noticeable.

Katya valued trust and reliability and expressed what they meant to her. She critiqued Spokane's Slavic community. It failed to meet her standards for trust and reliability because people she interacted with were prone to sharing secrets and often unreliable or inconsistent. Her experiences then caused her to distance herself and branch

out. Friends would often commit to socializing with her but would frequently cancel plans or make excuses. Katya explained how she did not have many Russian friends anymore because she noticed, "If you're friends with another Russian because it's your blood, you'll cancel plans." She then followed by stating, "if they make plans with an American, they'll keep their plans, and that's what I noticed in my generation." Katya was bothered by the different emphasis others put on their friendship with her compared to their friendships with Americans. Her self-esteem suffered. She further elaborated by saying:

> "With boundaries and just like self-worth things, you know as you grow up and like. When I was twenty-six, I really started to notice this pattern. I was like, you know, I don't wanna be in relationships with other people who you just bail at the last minute. 'Cause then am I not worth keeping plans, but you'll keep plans with your American friends? And so, I've kind of cut myself off the Russian community."

Katya wanted accountability with people's word. With her experiences, Katya stopped going to Russian churches as a teenager.

Katya represents Slavic immigrants who had purposely withdrawn from their ethnic community. With meaningful emotional exchanges sparse and unreliability rampant through her experiences, her connections could not satisfy her social and emotional needs. Combined with her lack of Russian language use in her household, perhaps her identity and link to the community were somewhat frayed. Having tried to partake in meaningful social exchanges and having had them fail, she rejected her community and emphasized the broader American one. However, she stated that she still had a Russian friend who was good at keeping plans.

Katya paralleled herself to her inquisitive father. She elaborated by saying, "I like to observe other people and so and I notice that when I was friends with those other Russians, it's like oh so we'll keep it with their American friends, but not with me." She later conceded that everyone was different and told me how she had American coworkers who "blow her off" as well. When asked if she missed having relationships with culturally similar people and if she wanted more Russian friends, she replied, "No, I don't." However, she still had a Slavic friend who attended the same church and had gone to the same Russian church that Katya attended before they knew each other. She also was part of a group that consisted of primarily Russian and Bulgarian women. However, still complained that unreliability was problematic. Ultimately, she did not want to reopen any doors that led to unreliability and failed expectations but would not isolate herself entirely from the community. After all, Spokane had a sizeable Slavic community embedded within it.

Katya said that she had one child with her American husband and that her husband had a child from a different relationship. I asked if she planned on familiarizing her kid with the Slavic community. Katya replied by saying there was no plan to integrate it into the community or teach Russian to her child. She then added, "If I do, it will be more things of like the word know to say in Russian in public or come here," perhaps to make it easier for her child to know that it is Katya speaking. Consequently, this would give the representation that they are Slavic in public. I found this peculiar because she did not want to be more involved with the larger Slavic community but would open the door by publicly using the language. If another community member had heard her say these words and phrases, they might have been interested in striking a conversation.

Katya's case indicated how integration into American culture might create estrangement from one's ethnic group. The fact that she immigrated to the United States at such a young age may have influenced her motivation to integrate into American groups. It may have also caused a detachment from her ethnic community. Perhaps it was because she was more open about her experiences and feelings, which helped her develop this approach. When seeking emotional support from the Slavic community, she could not find reliable friendships, leading to a lack of emotional expression and comfort. Unlike other participants who chose to have a Slavic support system as their primary social anchors, Katya chose an American network. Her Slavic social ties and identity were secondary. Despite the withdrawal from her ethnic community, she did not experience loneliness because she was about to obtain new relationships in American social groups that met her emotional needs.

5.2.4. Support in Spiritual and Ethnic Realms

Not all of my participants were religious and rejected the idea. Luka was one of them. He mentioned how a church was not central to his social network. Born in a former Soviet Union country to a Russian family. Luka migrated to Spokane when he was nine. Unlike other participants who belonged to Baptist or Evangelical churches, Luka used to be part of a Restorationist Christian denomination. Luka indicated that his denomination did not celebrate birthdays or holidays and felt "robbed" of building social capital and fostering relationships.

After relocating to Spokane, Luka left his religion. Although he recalled how his belief had been socially limiting, he appreciated the strictness of the faith. Luka credited his old belief for how it kept him and his family away from drugs and other bad

influences. However, his new identity was in his spirituality. He believed in the power of positive thinking and the manifestation of good as a substitute for his religious-based worldview. Consequently, his social networks also changed and reflected in separation.

Luka found refuge in a local gym and began to volunteer there. His social circle at the gym provided him support and guidance throughout his life. He recalled how his community helped him make challenging decisions and keep him out of trouble. Before COVID-19, Luka frequented saunas. In the saunas, he met a wide variety of people, including people of different ethnic groups, occupations, and religions. Luka often interacted with them. He was also a student, and between his personal goals and schooling, he was constantly busy.

Despite not being part of Spokane's most prolific and dominant Slavic social network system, Luka had other close Slavic friends. He described his network as more akin to a small social convey that he used to partake in more intimate social interactions. Luka told how he had a friend group consisting of two Ukrainians and one Belarusian. He characterized his circle of friends as a "mastermind" group, and together, they sent each other positive messages and words of encouragement. They were all either spiritual. Luka's friend group was essential because he wanted to converse in Russian to express things more accurately. He felt he could not always convey what he was trying to say to his American friends in English. Also, sharing and ethnic background fostered a sense of solidarity and belonging.

Outside of Luka's established Slavic friends, he experienced some difficulties. Luka discussed how he and his friends felt rejected and looked down upon by other Spokane Slavic communities because they did not conform to Slavic social norms and

embodied the American spirit of individuality and expression. An example of this appeared when Luka described how he dressed more American and said that Russians would speak to him in English. Luka would then reply in Russian to show them that there are multiple ways a Russian could present and carry themselves. He had also experienced some Russians talking negatively about him in Russian while not knowing he could speak. Luka also described how his friends with long hair and visible tattoos experienced judgments and perceived superficial interactions. Their appearance did not conform with Slavic social norms and caused feelings of otherness among their ethnic groups.

The Slavic-Christian community offered little genuine support to Luka, though he did not intentionally avoid interactions with its members. He described how he would go to events that he was invited to with Slavic Christians. However, when there, he felt disconcerted. Luka said, "I like to be in a big group setting. But, when the group has been established, and I come in as kind of a stranger or a buddy of somebody's, it brings discomfort to me just for some reason, even though I enjoyed my time there." Luka felt this way because of the difference in identity. He elaborated by saying that Christians all have the faith that unites them, and he felt different.

Overall, Luka had to rely on a small convoy of other non-religious Slavic immigrants for emotional support. While he could participate in Slavic Christian networks, he felt too much judgment and a lack of solidarity for more meaningful and comfortable relations. His embrace of American customs and ideologies had led to a separation between himself and the larger Slavic community. This distancing created more difficult circumstances for him. It seemed that loneliness arose throughout his life, but he did not say it was an issue. He could still utilize aspects of Slavic and American

networks that most aligned with his beliefs. His specially selected friend groups impeded loneliness from seriously developing, albeit with more difficulties.

5.3. Loneliness at Bay

The stories of Adrian, Ivan, Katya, and Luka were all divergent. Even though they sought various ways of making themselves at home in Spokane, they all managed to avoid and overcome loneliness. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, it is not possible to equivocally assume loneliness is not a prevalent issue in Spokane's first-generation Slavic Community. However, participants were able generally able to keep loneliness at bay. If there was loneliness, it was resolved quickly using ethnic friends and religious groups. Other studies have indicated that rates of loneliness in Slavic immigrant groups are dependent on their contexts. In a study by Yang and Victor (2011), they found that a group containing Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine immigrants had a higher loneliness rate than other cultural immigrant groups in Europe. Studies on Polish immigrants by Djundeva and Ellwardt (2019) and former Soviet Union immigrants by Dolberg et al. (2016) also reveal a significant presence of loneliness. In contrast, Neto's (2019) study of intercultural relations of Ukrainian immigrants in Portugal indicates that Ukrainians felt accepted and adapted well. The study also reported low levels of perceived discrimination (Neto 2019).

Slavic immigrants in Spokane also appeared to have adapted well. Many had meaningful social relationships and developed connections outside the Slavic community. Though, there were other factors also aiding Slavic immigrants. Spokane's Slavic social networks, the availability of social services within ethnic networks, local receptivity of Slavic immigrants, and the Christian background of Slavic immigrants all minimized

loneliness. Their context of departure, time of arrival, and ethnicity favored these Slavic

immigrants and contributed to their adaptation and network expansion. These factors may

have also influenced their differing experiences compared to other communities studied

in loneliness literature (Victor et al. 2012; Wu and Penning 2015).

The context of departure for many interviewed participants seemed to be a

significant factor in setting expectations and willingness to adapt. Many participants

came from families with no beneficial social connections, low economic status, and

families alienated by their societies. Their networks in their home countries were harmful

to such desires, considering they often consisted of other Christians. Often, conditions in

their countries of origin were undesirable and motivated them to adapt to a new culture.

Immigrating to the United States allowed participants to openly and safely practice their

religious beliefs while not being socioeconomically hampered. Even when met with

difficulties in the United States, Slavic immigrants were able to overcome them. The

capitalist nature of the United States was also appealing to participants because they

wanted to increase their socioeconomic and believed a capitalist economic system would

enable them. With optimism high and expectations low, feelings of loneliness and

inadequacy that would stem from unfulfilled expectations were uncommon.

It appeared that maintaining their Christian values (Carswell 2004) and coming

from communist and post-communist countries contributed to participants' success.

Many immigrants, including Ivan and Lazar, were entrepreneurial. Not only did they

utilize their networks to start independent businesses, but they were also appreciative of

the opportunity afforded to them. Other participants had jobs that paid more than they

would in their country of origin at the time of their migration. Many claimed that the

United States had offered more opportunities with better pay. They relished their new conditions.

Time of arrival was another factor that favored the generation of participants studied. When they immigrated to the United States, the Cold War had ended, and public opinion was not so antagonistic. Some participants described how they experienced discrimination initially, but such negative public interactions changed with time. If participants had migrated during the Cold War, they might have experienced more marginalization and alienation. However, the time they did migrate was opportune, and their Christian status garnered them support. After living in the United States for some time, participants did not feel unwanted or that they did not belong. Negative political and cultural portrayals also did not appear to bother most of them as well. Though interestingly, support of some historically common ideation in Slavic countries did.

Many participants talked about how they perceived certain American political and cultural groups as promoting socialism and communism. This perception particularly disturbed them, as they recalled how they had migrated to the United States to escape such systems. Such sentiments were so common that I heard them from almost every participant. While advocation for the political systems that caused Slavic immigrants to be marginalized and alienated within their country of origin may have been distressing for some, it also provided them with a form of solidarity with Americans who did not advocate for such ideologies. Such solidarity hindered the development of loneliness because Slavic immigrants could find others who agreed and accepted them.

Calvary Spokane was a relatively conservative church and talked of politics occasionally. In every instance in which they commentated on current political situations,

their position was always conservative. Members of the congregation that I had spoken to also held these beliefs and were anti-socialist and anti-communist. Slavic immigrants then resonated with the Americans in this community because their views aligned. Their lived experience was also of interest to the American population and would help Slavic immigrants establish solidarity and expand their networks with similarly valued people. Beyond the church setting, Spokane and its metropolitan areas had a substantial population of people who shared these values. Connections were then easier to form between Slavic immigrants and the American people.

If connections to Americans were less desired or comfortable, Slavic immigrants had access to an extensive Slavic community that spanned from Spokane to Idaho. When many had arrived, the Slavic community was already established and had multiple connections to the more prominent local communities. With the assistance of sponsorship programs and family, their facilitation into the community commenced with relative ease. Slavic immigrants also had plenty of opportunities to expand their networks.

Ethnically, Slavic immigrants were more similar to the majority population of Spokane, and their culture appeared somewhat congruent with American culture. Though American culture did not entirely reflect their value systems, many Americans who did were accessible to immigrants. All participants were also Caucasian, which reduced their likelihood of being treated differently. Indeed, when compared to immigrants in other studies, Spokane's Slavic community experienced less harmful effects of discrimination as described in other studies (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012, Suh et al. 2019). For example, Suh et al. (2019) reported how subtle discrimination perceived by Asian international students in Korea was related to increased mental stressors.

In contrast, subtle or even overt discrimination did not seem to bother Slavic participants. Perhaps their similarities allowed Spokane's Slavic community to grow substantially without being seen as an encroachment on the local American population. Their apparent similarities enabled immigrants to feel like they belonged and aided them in adaptation. Considering the effects of participants' contexts of reception, time of arrival, and ethnicity, it is understandable why loneliness was not a prominent issue for their community. Many of whom I interviewed migrated with conditions that motivated them to adapt. They migrated at an ideal time and were similar to the majority population. Discrimination and being singled out was unlikely. These conditions allowed the Slavic community to flourish and loneliness to be prevented or coped with effectively.

5.4. Rethinking Identity

Spokane's Slavic Community was mainly able to mitigate loneliness effectively using a shared identity. The Slavic-Christian identity was composed of two underlying identities. The first was Slavic immigrant identity, and the second was the Christian identity. All participants identified as being Slavic and most as also being American. However, the American portion of their identity appeared secondary upon elaboration. All participants but one also identified as Christian, saying that their Christianity was essential to their identity. Many participants had varying degrees of participation in the networks listed above. In many areas of their social lives, these networks overlapped. If a participant like Katya was not interested in maintaining her Slavic identity, she could interact with people in that network through her Christian network. In the case of Luka, he also interacted with other Slavic immigrants through Christian network activities.

The longer the duration of stay participants had, the more they integrated Slavic-Christian identities with their American identity. Though some chose to engage more Slavic community than others, as seen when comparing Ivan and Katya, they were all deeply rooted in their community. Usually, their identity formation began with their sponsorship to the United States, where a Christian church would sponsor them to relocate to Spokane. The church assisted participants in establishing themselves and offered language and information services. Participants' pre and post-migration experiences crafted multiple layers of solidarity in the Slavic-Christian community. Having a strong sense of solidarity then helped participants develop trust and shared identity. It also prevented and alleviated feelings of loneliness. Although Slavic-Christian identity gave many benefits, there were also some adverse effects.

Like Hellermann's (2006) study on Eastern European immigrant women, the Slavic-Christian identity network that participants belonged to could not always act in their favor. Gender was related to feelings or indicators of loneliness when the participants did not meet their social network's gender role expectations. Such gender roles were derived from their Slavic-Christian identities and communities. With Katya and Eva, not all of their gender role expectations were appealing to them. Katya's attitude towards her gender expectations caused distance between her and her network. She also criticized some of her general interactions with the community and how she did not feel valued or had enough trust. Katya thought she could not confide in or receive emotional support from other community members despite sharing an identity with them. These tensions also caused her to distance herself from her Slavic identity. However, she was

not lonely because of her social networks' diversity, participation in Christian

communities, and American cultural proficiency.

From the male perspective, Viktor did not appear to conform to all his gender role

expectations. His experiences then influenced the manifestation of mental stressors like

loneliness. They did so because he felt different from other males his age who shared his

identity. As demonstrated during our interview, other network members would comment

on his differences and positively reinforce conformed more with their expectations of

what a Slavic male looked like, as described by Luka. The other individual I saw who

looked far removed from their social norm also seemed to be lonelier. These examples

show the duality of the identity where if one conforms to the standards set by the

community, they will be rewarded. If one does not conform, they will not be punished per

se but will have less solidarity and social support. This distancing from the group then

leads to the potential for loneliness.

When there are incongruencies with the Slavic identity, the Christian identity

assumes the functions of the prior. For instance, with Katya, Eva, and Viktor, elements of

the Slavic identity were incongruent with their expectations. However, they did not claim

that loneliness was a severe or long-lasting issue. Their Christian community offered a

social network that could satisfy most of their social needs and prevent loneliness.

Together, Slavic-Christian communities have a deep-rooted, strong, and broad network.

Separately they still have extensive networks that can take care of the social needs of

their members, like in the instance of Luka, who was not a Christian but was not

generally lonely either. Luka relied more heavily on the Slavic network, and this

appeared to meet his social needs. In contrast, Katya distanced herself from the Slavic

social network but was not lonely because of her involvement in her Christian network. The intertwining of the two identities and networks created a more extensive network that allowed for variations in identities and identity strength within their members, assuming they were not deviating too far from the shared core beliefs and expectations.

The broader Slavic-Christian communities worked together to facilitate Slavic immigrants' migration and help them feel more adapted and integrated. When loneliness occurred, participants' Slavic-Christian network provided multiple services to their members to help mediate their symptoms. When one part of their identity network could not remedy loneliness, the other could distinguish the effects of loneliness by using their services. Identity combined with conditions like immigrants' context of departure, time of arrival, and ethnicity also created an environment where Slavic immigrants could openly express themselves and pursue their socioeconomic goals. The totality of Slavic immigrants' Slavic-Christian network services, their Slavic-Christian identity, and their pre and post-migration conditions effectively prevented and alleviated feelings of loneliness.

5.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter described how different participants interacted with their social networks and described their experiences. Each had a varied approach as to how involved they were, and it resulted in other effects. Generally, Slavic networks helped prevent and alleviate feelings of loneliness in all participants. Factors such as their contexts of departure, time of arrival, and ethnicities assisted their networks. Involvement in their ethnic and religious networks resulted in a unique identity that helped immigrants from different backgrounds connect and integrate into American society.

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Future Studies

6.1. Conclusion

In this thesis, I examined how first-generation Slavic immigrants not only experienced loneliness but how they were able to overcome it by building strong social relationships in Spokane, Washington. Much research had been done to understand loneliness, particularly among immigrant communities (Kim 1999; Kirova 2001; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015; Wu and Penning 2015; Dolberg et al. 2016; Koelet and de Valk 2016; Grundy 2017; Neto 2003; Djundeva 2019; ten Kate et al. 2020). I reviewed concepts and literature surrounding loneliness, migration, identity, social networks, and social capital to understand the experiences of Slavic immigrants. Social network theory guided my research and gave insight into the inner workings of Spokane's Slavic community. I also used a phenomenological approach to develop four research questions. These questions helped me better understand how Spokane's Slavic community encountered loneliness and helped identify methods of overcoming it. I conducted participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and case studies to collect qualitative data. Below, I discuss some of the core findings and indicate how my ethnographic research uncovered possible research questions. Spokane's first-generation Slavic community.

A strong sense of ethnic solidarity existed among first-generation Slavic immigrants. Mainly, the broader Slavic-Christian network was palpable as most participants came to Spokane through a church sponsorship for persecuted Christians.

Preexisting networks welcomed new arrivals and helped them integrate into their communities. Participants' contexts of departure, time of arrival, and ethnicity were factors that also aided their integration and feelings of belonging. Importantly, shared cultural beliefs and similarities significantly offset and buffered against a sense of alienation.

Migration to Spokane brought forth many opportunities. Participants were able to practice their religion without persecution. Their new freedom allowed them to expand their networks and express their identities. Emotional support became easier to access, and their Christian networks had more expressive and instrumental benefits than before. Many participants indicated how they were economically disadvantaged in their former countries because of their seemingly second-class citizenship. Their communist or post-communist governments living conditions led them to lower socioeconomic statuses in their home countries. Certainly, their expectations were limited. However, participants claimed to have better circumstances in Spokane. All of them did not experience downward economic mobility, which could have caused loneliness (Gilmore et al. 2002; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al. 2004; Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019; ten Kate et al. 2020). Informants appreciated better access to extensive networks and services unavailable to them in their home countries.

While participants were not lonely, there were incidences of loneliness. Much of it stemmed from homesickness, culture shock, or cultural bereavement. In particular, some older participants struggled with loneliness because of intersection factors such as lack of English proficiency and marital status. Others experienced loneliness because their current situations in life did not entirely reflect the social norms of their community.

Most participants averted the severity and endurance of loneliness. They were adept at managing alienation. When such feelings arose, participants explained how they would typically go to a culturally relevant place or person to alleviate such feelings. These places and persons were made available to them through their extensive cultural or religious networks. Cultural foods and shops were also utilized to overcome feelings of homesickness that related to loneliness. Participants had access to goods like traditional foods and garments across their communities. Such goods remedied feelings of cultural longing. Church services held in Russian were found throughout Spokane and satiated religious needs. Here the Russian language and other cultural activities were taught and performed. These institutions help prevent loneliness by bringing pieces of Slavic immigrants' home countries to Spokane.

After becoming more proficient with the culture and integrating themselves into a network, most feelings of loneliness dissipated. Participants were able to mingle with and familiarize themselves with Spokane's ever-expanding Slavic-Christian community, which gave them many resources to offset feelings of loneliness through expressive actions. If an individual was not Christian, they could still socialize with other non-religious Slavic immigrants. Overall, internal differences within the population seemed to account for short periods of loneliness. Generally, context of reception (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015), socioeconomic status (Gilmore et al. 2002; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al. 2004; Djundeva and Ellwardt 2019; ten Kate et al. 2020), perceived discrimination (Ponizovsky and Ritsner 2004; Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012; Neto 2019; Suh et al. 2019; Tegegne and Glanville 2019), duration of stay, age (Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al. 2004; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015), marital status (Gilmore et al.

2002; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al. 2004; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015), and gender (Gilmore et al. 2002; Treas and Mazumdar 2002; Iecovich et al.2004; Ahmad et al.2005; Aartsen and Jylha 2011; de Jong Gierveld et al. 2015) impacted one or more participants' feelings of loneliness. However, such feelings were remedied as participants became more established and learned how to navigate their networks. The harmful effects of the variables above were not as impactful for participants. Identity once again seemed to impact participants the most by impeding loneliness and contributing to a sense of belonging. The effects of the Slavic-Christian identity reflected Haslam et al. (2009) and McIntyre's (2018) observations of identity's beneficial properties.

Some participants experienced loneliness more frequently than others. Although, not one variable appeared to cause long-term loneliness. Instead, they influenced how participants interacted with their Slavic and Christian networks. Connections to sponsorship programs helped Slavic immigrants integrate into Spokane communities and were highly effective and favorable to first-generation Slavic immigrants. They provided them with both potential expressive and instrumental actions to help them achieve desired emotionally supportive relationships and socioeconomic conditions.

The results of this study aligned with findings from multiple studies on similar Slavic populations. Djundeva and Ellwardt (2019) found that Polish immigrants with higher language proficiency, more extensive and diverse networks were less lonely than their counterparts. Every participant who spoke English moderately well or proficiently also had access to the diverse Slavic-Christian community did not appear lonely consistently or over long periods. Dolberg et al. (2016) demonstrated how former Soviet Union immigrants with a longer duration of stay were less lonely. This finding was

congruent with the results of this study. Lastly, Neto (2019) examined Ukrainian

immigrants in Portugal. He concluded that they felt accepted and adapted well (Neto

2019), which aligns closely with the findings of this thesis.

Spokane had a large community of Slavic immigrants who had similar values and

accepted newcomers. A solid but flexible identity as Slavic-Christians allowed this

community to flourish and receive support from various avenues. There were also many

new network opportunities for Slavic immigrants that could be accessed with ease.

Consequently, uprooting did not have a harmful impact as described in other literature

(see Grundy 2017). Centralized churches acted as cultural hubs and satisfied most first-

generation immigrants' needs when coming to a new country. They also served as places

for immigrants to broaden their social networks and access goods and services. Having

such an identity and support system proved invaluable for the community's mental health

and integration. Loneliness was not a prevalent issue in Spokane's first-generation Slavic

immigrant community. The combination of sponsorship programs to help with

immigration, ethnic and faith-based networks centered around churches, and a strong

ethnic and religious identity prevented and alleviated loneliness most effectively.

6.2. Future Studies

Finally, more research is needed to understand loneliness in their community

better. Quantitative stories given by participants indicated that non-Christian Slavic might

experience more challenges and loneliness. Spokane's Slavic-Christian community was

well established and had many systems in place to prevent and mediate loneliness. In the

future, with a higher degree of Russian language proficiency, one should look for Slavic

non-Christian immigrants and interview them about their experiences. Identity was

integral in preventing and managing loneliness in the Slavic-Christian population, and Slavic non-Christian immigrants may not feel as accepted by others in the group. Researching how those who do not share this identity experience loneliness would help comprehensively understand the phenomena of loneliness in Spokane's Slavic immigrant communities.

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