

**RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS: TRANSNATIONALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF
U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS SINCE 2014**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the transnational realities of Russian immigrants in the United States. Drawing insights from personal accounts, I discuss immigrants' motives to immigrate to the United States and to stay connected to their homeland. I illustrate that political and economic factors, as well as the goals to enhance professional and personal lives, have shaped immigrants' decisions to come to the United States. At the same time, I show that determined to fulfill their social and civic responsibilities, Russian immigrants maintain ties to their families and friends back in Russia and also remain civically engaged in Russian society.

This dissertation also illustrates that a more intricate understanding of Russian immigrants today cannot be achieved in isolation from the political relations between Russia and the United States that have been rapidly deteriorating since 2014. There are different ways that Russian immigrants respond to the geopolitical divide between the two nation-states. Some Russian immigrants, for example, condemn Russia's foreign policy and global political behavior. Their criticism is often met with hostilities from Russians who have not emigrated. Other Russian immigrants, on the other hand, disapprove U.S. actions toward Russia and Russian society and consequently encounter antagonisms in the United States. These immigrants recount their experiences of exclusion from the U.S. social fabric. There are also those Russian immigrants who question international acts of the political leaders of both countries. Coping with antagonistic attitudes from Russian and U.S. societies toward their political views and/or ethnic background, these individuals emphasize a growing detachment from both nations. Based on individual accounts, I argue that the contemporary tensions that have emerged between the two nations-states create a barrier to the development of a transnational identity among Russian immigrants. Specifically, living in a hostile political environment, Russian immigrants do not share a simultaneous sense of belonging in relation to Russia and the United States.

By focusing on Russian immigrants' experiences with U.S.-Russia relations, this dissertation also brings to light individual efforts to contest confrontations that shape the political landscape between Russia and the United States. As transnational subjects with cross-border ties and lives, Russian immigrants utilize their transnational positions and cultural competencies to impact international views of Russian and U.S. nationals. They frequently resort to transnational dialogues and socio-cultural acts to raise social awareness and sympathies between their home and

host nations. By developing and investing their efforts into improving U.S.-Russia ties, the ultimate goal that Russian immigrants seek to achieve is to discourage members of Russian and U.S. societies from seeing each other as enemy nations.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2016, I embarked on a research journey to try to understand what it means to be a post-Soviet Russian immigrant in the United States. As a post-Soviet immigrant myself, I wanted to learn more about Russian immigrants and their lives as newcomers in a new cultural space. It is my conviction that immigration is a personal and a complicated endeavour. Therefore, my objective was to collect different stories and to explore how the phenomenon of immigration complicates immigrants' individual histories and self-views.

Vadim, a first-generation immigrant from Russia, was one of the first immigrants who agreed to participate in my research study. My friend from Turkmenistan, my home country, introduced me to Vadim when I visited Washington, D.C. in 2015. Vadim and I met several times after I began my research project. Vadim is in his mid-thirties. He moved to the United States in 2012 to pursue a career as an international development expert in one of the international organizations in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. As someone who studied global finance, Vadim's goal was to build an international career. His professional ambitions motivated him to look for opportunities abroad. During one of our conversations, Vadim confessed that he enjoys working in a global space (Sassen, 2001) like the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area because the human and cultural diversity that this city offers makes it a unique and an exciting place for living. Although initially it was challenging for Vadim to adjust to a new environment, he was very proud of living and working in the United States.

In the process of learning about Vadim's immigration experiences, I also told him about my life and my complex identity. I explained that although I was born and raised in Turkmenistan, I became a citizen of Russia in 2002. I received Russian citizenship because of my mother's background. My mother was born on the territory of Soviet Russia. She then immigrated to Turkmenistan at the age of five when my grandmother was transferred to Turkmenistan to help build a railroad system across former Soviet republics of Central Asia. Because my mother was born on the territory of today's Russia, she was granted Russian citizenship in 2002.

As the daughter of a Russian national, I was also given the opportunity to obtain a Russian citizenship. I explained to Vadim that becoming a Russian citizen felt quite natural to me because I grew up speaking only Russian language, watching Russian television and reading Russian literature. I attended a Russian school in Turkmenistan. Moreover, as a child, I spent several

summers in Russia visiting my mother's extended family. I told Vadim that before I started my journey as a graduate student in the United States, I lived and worked in Moscow, Russia for a couple of years.

Learning about each other's biographies, Vadim and I also shared stories and personal anecdotes about our hardships of living in the post-Soviet space. We talked about our childhood, recalling how post-Soviet societies struggled with poverty after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. We also discussed the economic growth in the early 2000s in the post-Soviet region and how it improved the well-being of many Russian and Central Asian families. Sharing stories about his family, friends, and classmates who currently live in different parts of the world, Vadim compared his life in the United States and Russia. He was tracing cultural similarities and differences between the two countries to indicate how challenging but yet exciting his life has become.

As Vadim shared stories about his life in the United States, it became clear to me that he leads a transnational lifestyle. Specifically, he works hard to build his life in a new country and remains actively engaged with Russian society. Vadim communicates with his family and friends back in Russia and regularly stays informed on the socio-political and economic developments in his home country. Seeing his life as unique, Vadim embraces his daily experiences that span his country of origin and destination.

Our conversations with Vadim have also addressed the topic of political tensions that have been rapidly growing in U.S.-Russia relations since 2014. Vadim confessed that as someone whose life is situated between Russia and the United States, he is impacted by the political tensions that have emerged in U.S.-Russia ties. Vadim questioned whether political and ideological clashes between the two nation-states have easy solutions. However, he remained hopeful that as an immigrant in the United States he could create a greater understanding between the two societies.

In his assertions, Vadim adhered to a global perspective, insisting that U.S.-Russia ties impact not only his home and host countries but the entire global society. He firmly believed that stronger U.S.-Russia bilateral relations are instrumental for global security. "I think that will be better for us if America and Russia were friends. That would increase the stability of the world," Vadim told me, expressing his hopes for more collaboration between Russia and the United States.

The issues in U.S.-Russia ties that Vadim and I talked about relate specifically to the antagonisms which have been rapidly progressing between Moscow and Washington since 2014

when the government of Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula, a part of the territory of Ukraine. Russia's occupation of Crimea prompted an immediate backlash from the leadership of the European Union and the United States who openly condemned Russia's military behavior on the territory of the neighboring state. In response to Russia's violation of the Ukrainian territorial sovereignty, the United States imposed sanctions against Russian financial, energy, and military sectors (U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Center 2014).

Another political development that pushed the clash between the United States and Russia further down the spiral is the conviction of the U.S. government that Russian state officials have carried out a cyber-campaign to interfere in the U.S. presidential election in 2016. The U.S. intelligence community assessed that the Russian government directed cyber infiltration into the Democratic National Committee network and resorted to disinformation efforts to discredit the position of Hillary Clinton, a Democratic presidential nominee, in the presidential race against the republican candidate Donald Trump. Since 2016, U.S. authorities have repeatedly claimed that the Russian government favored Donald Trump and used cyberattacks to assist him in winning the election ("Office," 2017).

The Russian government has consistently denied the accusations from the U.S. government. These denials, however, did not ease but instead strengthened the tensions between the political leaders of both nations. The disagreements have also impacted the attitudes of U.S. and Russian societies toward one another. According to the Pew Research Center, in August 2017, 47% of U.S. nationals considered Russia a significant threat to their society, while 67% viewed the country of Russia unfavorably (Vice, 2017). According to the findings of the analytical center "Levada-Center," in January 2018, 68% of Russian respondents indicated that they view the United States as the main enemy of Russia (Baklanov, 2018).

Curiously enough, a group of people that have been left out of the political dialogue about the social implications of U.S.-Russia deteriorating relations is the Russian immigrants in the United States. While the clash between the two national hegemonies has a strong visibility in the political and media landscape of both countries, very little is known about the ways in which Russian immigrants' lives have been impacted by the tensions between their home and host societies. The research study presented in this dissertation attempts to fill gaps in our knowledge about the ways in which U.S.-Russia relations shape individual experiences of Russian immigrants in the transnational category.

More specifically, this dissertation examines the transnational realities of Russian immigrants like Vadim with skilled professional and educational backgrounds. Drawing insights from personal accounts, I discuss immigrants' motives to immigrate to the United States and to stay connected to their homeland. I illustrate that political and economic factors, as well as the goals to enhance professional and personal lives, have shaped immigrants' decisions to come to the United States. At the same time, I show that determined to fulfill their social and civic responsibilities, Russian immigrants maintain ties to their families and friends back in Russia and also remain civically engaged in Russian society.

I also argue that a more intricate understanding of Russian immigrants today cannot be achieved in isolation from the deteriorating political relations between the United States and Russia. As this study will illustrate, there are different ways that individual Russian immigrants respond to and live through the geopolitical divide between the two powers. Some Russian immigrants, for example, harshly condemn Russia's foreign policy and global political behavior. Their accounts reveal that criticism of the Russian global ambitions is often met with hostilities from Russians who have not emigrated. Critical stances towards Russian policies leads to a heightened identification with the United States and its political values in relation to Russia. Other Russian immigrants, on the other hand, criticize U.S. actions toward Russia and consequently encounter antagonisms in the United States. As these immigrants' accounts demonstrate, they feel foreign and excluded in U.S. society. The hostile reactions to their disapproval of U.S. foreign affairs, in fact, increase Russian immigrants' emotional attachment to their homeland. At the same time, there are also those Russian immigrants who question and object to international acts of both countries. These immigrants recognize that their political views position them as outsiders in political cultures in Russia and the United States. They deal with unreceptive attitudes from Russian and U.S. societies and confront feelings of detachment from both nation-states. Based on Russian immigrants' experiences, I argue that the hostilities in U.S.-Russia relations hinder Russian immigrants from developing a transnational identity. More specifically, responding to the adverse political environment, Russian immigrants refrain from claiming a simultaneous sense of belonging in relation to Russia and the United States.

By focusing on Russian immigrants' realities in the context of U.S.-Russia political tensions, I also reveal their efforts to contest a hostile environment that impacts Russia and the United States. I show that despite the challenges that the international political divide creates,

Russian immigrants recognize the role they play in raising social awareness and sympathies between their home and host nations. Concerned about the negative implications of the U.S.-Russia political tensions, immigrants resort to informal dialogues and socio-cultural acts to discourage members of Russian and U.S. societies from seeing each other as enemy nations.

In exploring Russian immigrants' transnationalism within the U.S.-Russia relations context, I draw from theoretical and empirical efforts in the field of transnational migration studies. In the following sections, I will discuss scholarly perspectives on transnationalism that have informed and guided my work. I will also describe research methodology that I employed to explore Russian immigrants' transnational realities affected by global political processes and shifts.

1.1 Immigrant Transnationalism

For the past several decades, the social phenomenon of transnational migration has remained at the center of immigration research. Scholars define transnationalism as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, Glick Schiller, Blanc Szanton, 1994, p.7). Immigrants with transnational links to their countries of origin were also given the term ‘transmigrants’ to better reflect their transnational lifestyles (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc Szanton, 1995). Transnationalism has become a significant analytical framework to expand an understanding of the immigrant life and to move away from the postulates of assimilation theories.

Because assimilation theories focused primarily on immigrants' experiences of social, economic, and political integration in a host society (see, e.g., Park, 1928; Gordon, 1964; Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2006), proponents of the transnational framework have argued that assimilation perspective could not fully capture the complexity of immigrant life, and especially those of the first-generation immigrants. Scholars of transnational migration argue for the need to explore not only what happens to immigrants in the adopted country but also to understand why the newcomers remain connected to their place of origin. The major argument that underpins the idea of transnational migration is that immigrants not only “settle and become incorporated in the economy and political institutions, localities and patterns of daily life of the country in which they reside,” but that they also “build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated” (Glick Schiller,

Basch, & Blanc Szanton, 1995, p. 48). This particular definition of transnationalism has guided and informed my research process.

It is important to remember that although the concept of transnationalism is considered to be of recent development in scholarly circles, immigrant populations maintained transnational living long before this concept gained considerable academic attention. Exploring the histories of various immigrant groups, historians, in particular, have provided archival evidence that immigrants remained connected to their country of origin throughout the nineteenth century and even earlier (Ling, 2012). Yet, what differentiates the contemporary form of transnational migration from the past transnational engagement is its more globalized and intensified process and scope. The new order of the global economy, flexible forms of capital accumulation, the advancement of transportation, relative affordability of travel, and innovative communication technologies have significantly increased the practices and durability of contemporary transnationalism and enabled immigrants to be more proactive in different spheres of their host and home communities (Foner 1997; Hannerz 1996; Vertovec, 2009).

Much of the scholarship on transnational immigration has directed its interest in exploring what kind of relationships transmigrants maintain with their homelands as they become incorporated in a host society. Studies have illustrated that immigrant individuals quite often stay transnationally involved by keeping affective bonds with transnational families and transnational friends. Transmigrants provide transnational care (Baldassar, Baldock, & Wilding, 2007) and send home what Levitt (2001) refers to as social remittances by activating the transnational exchange of ideas, beliefs, behavior patterns, and other forms of the newly acquired social capital in immigration (Levitt, 2001; Ahmed, 2005; Duany, 2011; Taylor & et al., 2012). International travels similarly play a significant role in transnationalism as they allow immigrants to reconnect and share the knowledge they have obtained in a new land with families and larger social circles in the homeland (Salih, 2003; Levitt, 2001).

Economic transnationalism is another area of immigrant activity that scholars have tapped into in more recent years (Vertovec, 2009). Scholars highlight that by participating in the workforce in the country of destination, immigrants' labor and skills are crucial for the advancement of the national economy of the receiving state. Simultaneously, new technologies and the compression of time and space enable immigrant groups to easily send monetary remittances or particular goods that the loved ones back home request. Besides financially

supporting their transnational families and communities, immigrants often establish and run various businesses of different levels and scales in their countries of origin. Economic transnationalism highlights the role that immigrants play in executing transnational financial and entrepreneurial processes that help maintain or boost global economic growth. (Carmichael, Drori, & Honig, 2010).

The transnational lifestyle of immigrants may also encompass philanthropic activities that they undertake to benefit the under-resourced and minoritized communities in home and host societies. Immigrants often organize and donate to various social initiatives that seek to advance equality for underprivileged groups in both countries. Furthermore, immigrants provide financial and social assistance to religious institutions in both nations, which are connected through transnational networks that immigrants develop and maintain. As scholars have illustrated, the global operation of economic and religious transnational networks reflects the power of transnational immigrant engagement to strengthen interconnections between diverse populations throughout the world (Yoshihara, 2007; Kane, 2011).

Exploring political struggles and reforms of postcolonial societies, empirical research on transnationalism has also illustrated transmigrants' civic participation in socio-political spheres in their societies of origin and destination. Civic engagement refers to the activities through which individuals learn about and try to develop solutions to economic, social, or political issues of their communities. It includes activities such as obtaining and sharing information, participating in political meetings and protests, engaging in discussions in diverse settings that concern communities, participating in legislative election, and so forth (McCartney, 2013). Scholars demonstrate that transnational immigrants often follow political, economic, and social developments that affect their sending communities. They also run for political offices in their country of origin and contribute to civil society projects to defend immigrants' interests and human rights. Scholars stress that transmigrants' civic activism in their homeland often intersects with their political engagement in the receiving state (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1998). As immigrants contribute to the nation-state building projects in sending and receiving societies, transnationalism becomes the mechanism for immigrant groups to practice political agency across national borders.

While some scholars seek to answer what types of activities enable immigrants to stay connected and to form transnational fields of engagement, others question what practices should

be counted as essentially transnational in their attempt to develop a verifiable measurement of transnational immigration. Portes et al. (1999), for example, have suggested that immigrants should be viewed as transnational only if they have “regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders” (p. 219). Itzigsohn et al. (1999), however, have complicated the question of transnational engagement by differentiating between the narrow and broad transnationalism. Specifically, they use the term *narrow transnationalism* to refer to those cross-border activities that immigrants undertake continuously and regularly. *Broad transnationalism*, on the other hand, is used to refer to those activities in which immigrants engage only occasionally.

When exploring transnationalism of foreign-born populations, immigration research has equally been concerned with understanding why immigrants seek to maintain ties to their country of origin when they come to settle in a new country. In answering this question, scholars have demonstrated that staying connected to their countries of origin, and specifically to families and friends, provides immigrants with significant emotional support that they often need. This support uplifts immigrant individuals who continuously go through the processes of adaptation in the new cultural environment (Lim, 2009).

Transnational experiences are also closely tied to immigrants’ ethno-racial backgrounds, sexuality, gender, and national origin and the reception context of the new society (Miles, 2004). Specifically, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination encountered by immigrants in a receiving environment are some of the main reasons why immigrant individuals stay attached to their homelands (Fujita, 2009). Emotional attachment to the homeland is what Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) describe as a way of belonging in a transnational field. Although immigrant labor brings important capital to the adopted countries, discrimination in a new cultural context not only limits social mobility of immigrant populations but also excludes them from full participation in the mainstream society. As a coping mechanism and resistance to exclusion, immigrants develop a stronger sense of identity with their country of origin and stay engaged with a place that fills the void of non-belonging.

At the same time, scholars stress that some immigrants may not share a sense of belonging to their countries of origin. Even if immigrant individuals maintain numerous connections to their homeland, they may resist identifying with a home society. Such immigrants

participate in what scholars refer to as a transnational way of being (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

By maintaining transnational ties either through being or belonging, immigrant groups create and live their lives in a transnational social field, “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 1009). The concept of the transnational social field, just like the phenomenon of transnationalism itself, interrogates the notion that people and their cultures are bound to the territory of one nation-state. Governments may try to control human mobility by means of immigration policies and control over physical borders. Transnational practices and social fields, however, have contributed to the porosity of national borders, making nation-states increasingly deterritorialized.

Despite the ability of immigrants to challenge national borders, scholars remind us that governments, including international relations between sending and receiving nation-states, have always played an important role in contextualizing immigrants’ experiences. Significant in this case were the works of immigration historians who have shown, for instance, that during the two World Wars, when the United States fought against Germany, many German Americans and German immigrants were not only exposed to anti-German sentiments in U.S. society but also had to sever their transnational ties to their families and communities of origin (DeConde, 1992; Fox, 2000). The tragic history of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants in the United States during World War II also elucidates that international relations can significantly impact people’s everyday lives (Ng, 2002; Okihiro, 2013). After Japan attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor leading to the deterioration in U.S.-Japanese relations, over one hundred thousand innocent people of Japanese descent were placed in U.S. internment camps dealing with racism from the larger U.S. society and the U.S. government. The story of Iranians in the United States represents the most recent example of an ethnic community whose experience with U.S. xenophobia is still shaped by the political tensions in U.S.-Iranian relations that have existed since the 1980s (Mobasher, 2012). What the histories and stories of these communities ultimately highlight is that it is essential to consider the power of nation-states and political leaders to influence the life trajectories of various populations, including immigrants.

Indeed, the transnationalism framework expands our understanding of immigrant lives. My dissertation is an empirical contribution that also seeks to understand how transnationalism is

lived when affected by international relations. By focusing on Russian immigrants' experiences in the context of U.S.-Russia deteriorating ties, the goal of my work is not only to show how and why immigrants maintain transnational lifestyles but also to illuminate what happens to immigrants' identities and participation in international affairs when they are forced to navigate a hostile political environment between their home and host nations.

1.2 Research Methodology

1.2.1 Research Approach and Participants

Since the goal of my study was to highlight Russian immigrants' voices and perspectives, I used a qualitative research approach that focuses on the non-numerical qualitative data analysis (Ulanovsky, 2008). Qualitative data are "any data that are collected by researchers and which are expressed in words and not in numbers" (Ulanovsky, 2008, p. 130). "Grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly 'interpretivist'" (Mason, 2002, p.3), scholars employ this approach to collect and interpret people's extended narratives and accounts that reveal the complexity of their experiences, identities, cultures, and awareness of reality. Qualitative research methods, which range from interviews to the analysis of audiovisuals, are used by this approach to understand human conditions by centering human perceptions of social issues (Illingworth, 2006). Intensive engagement with study subjects through qualitative research allows an in-depth exploration of how people interpret their lives and the meanings they attach to their actions and emotionalities (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

The qualitative approach to research is not without tensions. It is often compared to a quantitative approach, which is considered more objective in data collection and analysis, producing more generalizable findings. Qualitative approach that center's individuals' personal beliefs and meanings is often regarded as a form of inquiry that advances biased accounts of human experience. Indeed, unlike quantitative methodology, qualitative research avoids generalizing people's experiences (Ulanovskiy, 2008). At the same time, "acknowledg[ing] the existence and study of the interplay of multiple views and voices" (James & Busher, 2009, p.7), the biases that qualitative research can reveal should rather be considered as nuanced human experiences and perceptions which challenge assumptions about the world (Mason, 2002; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

I conducted this research project from 2016 to 2019. Exploring and analyzing U.S.-Russia relations as experienced by Russian immigrants with transnational ties, I, too, did not seek to produce generalizable findings. My goal was to study Russian immigrants and to understand the numerous ways in which U.S.-Russia tensions have impacted their lives in both societies. Therefore, while my study discusses some commonalities in Russian immigrants' backgrounds, it also points out the differences in how Russian immigrants experience global political tensions.

Russian immigrants today live throughout the United States. The states that have the largest number of Russian immigrants include New York (77,220 immigrants,) California (69,702 immigrants), and Florida (27, 251 immigrants) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Research participants in my study come from Washington, D.C., and the states of Maryland and Virginia. I chose to recruit informants from these locations because together they are also home to a large number of immigrants from Russia in the United States. According to U.S. immigration data, around 20,000 Russian immigrants of various ages and backgrounds live in Washington, D.C. and the states of Maryland and Virginia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

What also drew me to this particular area is the visibility of Russian immigrants and their culture. There are numerous restaurants, different stores, cultural, and educational centers spread all across the two states and the city of Washington, D.C., which are owned and run by the Russians. Furthermore, my decision to conduct my study in this location was also shaped by the fact that several of my close friends had already lived in Washington, D.C., when I started my research process. My friends were extremely generous and provided me with housing when I traveled to the research site and with the emotional support that helped me navigate the research space. Their assistance was highly significant and helped me to undertake and complete the data collection process.

The sample of informants consists of 20 immigrants with ages varying from early thirties to mid-fifties. I recruited ten men and ten women for a gender balance in the study. All participants immigrated to the United States in the aftermath of the Soviet Union disintegration and currently hold skilled occupations. Sixteen participants identified themselves as individuals of the middle-class backgrounds, while four described themselves as belonging to the upper-middle class. Please see Appendix A for study participants' profiles.

I understand that since my research focuses on Russian immigrants' transnationalism, it would greatly benefit my study if I traveled to Russia with my informants and observed their experiences back in their homeland. Scholars have developed and conducted multi-sited ethnographies to illustrate that following study participant to multiple sites and countries allow researchers to gain a more holistic insight into people's complicated lives (Marcus, 1995; George, 2005). Unfortunately, financial and time restrictions made it impossible for me to travel to Russia with my informants. However, the flexible nature of a qualitative research approach has provided me with enough opportunities to gather data to report on immigrants' ties to Russian society.

1.2.2 Positionality

Numerous scholars in various disciplines have emphasized that recruiting study subjects that meet research criteria and retaining them are some of the most challenging steps in the research process (Miller, 2013; Grove, Burns, & Gray, 2013). For me, similarly, finding informants who would agree to be a part of the study proved to be a challenge. In many ways, this experience was connected to my positionality and the nature of the research project, in general.

Whenever scholars discuss the researcher's positionality, they reflect upon their status either as an insider or an outsider of the community under study. Some scholars, for instance, argue that insiders have an advantage in studying those subjects with whom they share backgrounds because knowing one's particular group enables the researcher to provide deeper insights into the studied phenomenon (Hannabus, 2000; Hockey, 1993). Other scholars, on the other hand, claim that being an outsider may provide more advantages to researchers because they may be perceived as neutral in research, thus gain more in-depth information to posed questions (Tewksbury & Gagne, 1997). Mullings (1999), however, speaks out against the binary of the insider or outsider status of the researchers, claiming that it positions researchers' identities and sites as fixed. The relationship between study subjects and researchers are more complicated and may continuously shift. Being an insider does not guarantee closeness with study subjects, whereas an outsider may develop sympathies and closer ties through the prolonged engagement with informants.

My positionality as an insider of the Russian community, both as a Russian citizen and a person who was brought up in the Soviet Russian culture, and also my background as a student in the United States complicated my experiences with the research process. Some Russian immigrants, for instance, treated my closeness to Russia with suspicion. Many refused to take part in my research because they were afraid that I was a spy working for Russian authorities. As some immigrant explained, they did not want to be persecuted for their political opinions. Other immigrants, on the other hand, worried that as a student who is supported by a U.S. university, I could be collecting information for U.S. authorities and that they would encounter problems in the United States for their political stances.

In many cases, Russian immigrants would ask me blatantly if I worked as a spy for U.S. or Russian secret services. Such accusations were very offensive, and, at times, I felt discouraged to carry on with my project. However, I always thanked every immigrant that I approached for their time and never pressured them to change their decisions about study participation.

At the same time, it would be erroneous for me to claim that my ties to Russia and my student status in the United States were not at all helpful in my project. Study participants who agreed to take part in my research explained that they did so because I come from a post-Soviet country and because I have insight into Russian culture. My knowledge of the Russian language and a deep understanding of the Russian humor were especially helpful in building rapport and personable relations with my informants. Study participants and I easily connected when we discussed our experiences of living in Russian culture and shared our immigration stories. Furthermore, some immigrants sincerely wanted to help me succeed in my academic journey. Almost all informants told me that they were proud of me and admired my determination to pursue an advanced educational degree in the United States. They all wanted to contribute to the realization of my educational goals. I will always be thankful to all of my informants without whom it would not be possible to complete this project.

Developing relations with the study participants were essential to my project as I collected the narratives of Russian immigrants about their transnational lives. At the same time, participants of the study were curious about my life as a citizen from the post-Soviet region and a graduate student. I was very open with my informants about who I was and what my future goals

were. I thought that it was only ethical of me to share information about my identity and life because I collected personal accounts about my informants' immigrant realities.

I told my participants about my family, my relatives in Russia, where and how I grew up, and why I decided to come to the United States. I also shared my experiences of living in the United States as an international graduate student. In addition to learning about my personal and professional life, almost all of the study participants and other Russian immigrants that I met and interacted with during research asked about my personal opinions around U.S.-Russia relations since 2014. To avoid imposing my personal views and impacting participants' positions, I only addressed and shared the perspectives of different academics that work on U.S.-Russia bilateral relations today. Some participants were very interested in learning how an academic community assesses relations between Moscow and Washington. The conversation about scholarly perspectives opened up space for the study participants to address how they understand and negotiate U.S.-Russia ties in their everyday lives.

1.2.3 Ethics

Considering the fact that my research project focused on issues of political nature, the question of ethics was central to my data collection process. Prior to starting my research study, I obtained official approval from the Purdue University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which reviewed the goals of my research project and study instruments for ethical standards. As scholars emphasize, the researcher's "primary responsibility is to those studied (people, places, material, and those with whom you work)" (Madison, 2005, p.111). Pursuit of knowledge or obligations to funding institutions cannot be prioritized over subjects' social, economic, political, emotional and physical well-being and "researchers must make every effort to ensure that their work does *not harm the safety, dignity, or the privacy* of those with whom they work" (Madison, 2005, p.111). Responsible for the safety and well-being of the study participants, I fully informed them what my project seeks to accomplish and the rights they have as study subjects.

More specifically, I presented my study participants with the *Informed Consent* form that detailed the purpose of the project, the data collection methods, the questions around confidentiality, and the data processing procedures. All of my informants had several days to review the form. Scholars recognize that in certain situations, research participants may feel that they need to get approval from their communities or family members to participate in social

studies (Lou & Pike, 2007). Therefore, my goal was to provide study participants with enough time to make a decision about research participation and to get necessary approvals from their families or other communities, if necessary. In that, I followed Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) conviction that a researcher has to think in critical ways about the study participants and their participation in research.

One of the main aspects that I stressed several times before beginning and during the actual data collection process is confidentiality. I informed my participants that the study was strictly confidential and that their identity would not be disclosed unless required by law. Although some of the immigrants have asked me to use their real names in the final version, I emphasized to them that as I work with data, I would eliminate all identifying information and use pseudonyms in the dissertation. Also, while some of my participants wanted me to include their full information in my work, others asked not to disclose their places of birth, age, or the actual name of the companies or organizations in which they work. As scholars remind us, "pseudonyms are not necessarily enough to ensure anonymity" (Clark-Kazak, 2011, p.44). I realized that study participants were also conscious of the fact that pseudonyms may not truly conceal their real identities. Therefore, following participants' requests, I do not reveal the actual ages of my informants and do not name the actual towns in which Russian immigrants lived before immigration. I also do not provide specific details about the towns in which Russian immigrants live today and about U.S. companies or organizations in which they currently work.

While I was conducting my study, I understood that people who are not immersed in the academic world have a limited understanding of research procedures and their rights as research subjects. Therefore, I made sure to explain in detail what academic research entails and addressed every question that my study participants had about their study participation. Since I did not compensate my participants financially for their time invested in my work, I shared my expertise on the research process and explained what research subjects should be aware of before they decide to take part in any studies in the future. Sharing this knowledge was one of the modest ways that I could thank Russian immigrants for letting me explore their lives. All study subjects appreciated my efforts and thanked me for being interested in their immigrant experiences.

1.2.4 Semi-structured Interviews

To collect and present immigrants' voices, I relied on several qualitative research methods. Specifically, I used semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant-observations with 'go-along' interviews. These research methods were ideal for my study as they enabled me to gain in-depth insights into the multiplicity of Russian immigrants' perspectives and experiences in the context of U.S.-Russia relations and to center participants' narrations of themselves and the surrounding world.

Semi-structured interviews are the type of interviews where the researcher uses an interview guide to direct conversations towards topics essential to answering the main research questions. Although the questions for the semi-structured interviews are developed in advance, the responses of the interviewees are open-ended and extensive (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999).

Semi-structured interviews helped me to collect demographic information of the study participants and to capture the life histories and narration of Russian immigrants' attempts to settle in U.S. society and to maintain links to Russia. Moreover, I undertook semi-structured interviews with each participant to explore immigrants' opinions about the worsening of U.S.-Russia relations since 2014. These interviews were effective in helping me learn about the impacts of the political tensions on immigrants' lives in both nation-states.

I conducted these interviews in the locations and at times that were most convenient to my study participants. I met with my informants in their homes, coffee shops and in their workplaces. Some interviews I conducted online whenever my informants were available for the study. These interviews were conducted using Skype telecommunication application. Online interviews, just like face-to-face interviews, proved to be very useful for my work. In fact, many respondents stated that they enjoyed being interviewed via Skype as they were able to remain in the convenience of their homes while participating in a research project.

Semi-structured interviews lasted between two to five hours and were carried out over several days. All of my participants agreed to be recorded during the interview process. Although the interviews were quite lengthy, I sensed that my interviewees enjoyed this particular process. My informants were very open recounting their immigration stories and sharing their opinions about the political tensions between Russia and the United States.

The fact that semi-structured interviews have a specific focus did not preclude me from obtaining new information from the participants. Because the questions I had were open-ended, I often asked respondents to expand on their stories (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999). Although I had a list of questions to guide the conversations, I developed new questions during our discussions to get a firmer understanding of immigrants' experiences and their identities. What was also practical about semi-structured interviews is that they let me postpone specific questions that the respondents found emotionally challenging to discuss (Luo & Wildemuth, 2009). These discussions were usually related to the emotional experiences of emigration from Russia and adjustment in the United States. They were also related to the concerns that Russian immigrants have about the current state of U.S.-Russia relations. Please see Appendix B for a list of semi-structured interview questions used in this study.

I transcribed all the interviews that I recorded. I also wrote summaries and reflections of the interview process. I eliminated the personal identifiers of my informants and assigned specific pseudonyms to each participant to maintain confidentiality. Some of my participants suggested their own pseudonyms they wanted me to use in the study.

When I worked with interview transcriptions, summaries, and reflections, I read these materials in detail to detect points that were unclear to me, and that needed further investigation. I then contacted my study participants again to get clarifications of some of the aspects that I found puzzling.

During the follow-up interviews, some immigrants brought photographs to help me visualize their life experiences before and after immigration. With the use of photographs, semi-structured interviews turned into photo-elicitation interviews. "Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview" (Harper, 2002, p.13). Photographs not only helped me build a better rapport with the interviewees, but also motivated the interviewees to be more focused on the subject of the conversation (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). When reflecting on the photographs, respondents extended their personal stories and focused on those moments of their transnational lives that were most important to them. To ensure participants' confidentiality, I did not collect the photographs. Although many participants were open to sharing copies of their images, I decided to use photographs for discussion purposes only.

To analyze data collected through interviews, I applied thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis requires an active “involvement and interpretation from the researcher” (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p.10). Moreover, it “move[s] beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes” (p.10). I found thematic analysis to be the most appropriate approach for my data analysis because it allowed me to identify and to analyze “patterns” (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Moreover, the flexibility of the method permitted me to contrast participants’ accounts, identifying the experiences unique to a particular informant.

Conducting thematic analysis, I followed the 6-step process proposed by researchers Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). This process included the following:

First Step: I familiarized myself with data. I read the transcription of interviews, summarizing, and underlining the main ideas of each transcription.

Second Step: I created initial codes to analyze transcriptions. My initial codes were based on research questions that focused on immigrants’ reasons for relocation to the United States and their transnationalism between their home and host societies. I also developed initial codes to help me track impacts of U.S.-Russia relations on Russian immigrants and their transnational lives.

Third Step: I created and searched for themes. Specifically, I combined codes creating more broad themes to capture implicit and explicit ideas in the collected data.

Fourth Step: I reviewed my themes to ensure that they genuinely represent informants’ responses.

Fifth Step: I revised my themes to track patterns and differences in data.

Sixth Step: I created a document with extracts that either reflected the ideas of several respondents or represented a particular experience that differentiated one informant from the rest of the participants.

These steps were beneficial to analyze a large amount of data that I collected systematically.

1.2.5 Participant Observation with ‘Go-along’ Interviews

In addition to conducting semi-structured interviews, I collected data through participant observation (Bernard, 2006). Participant observation as a research method allows researchers to spend time together with their informants, observing them in various settings to gain a deeper understanding of the participants’ lives. During the course of my study, I spent time with some of my informants in their home settings, observing how they live and discussing issues that mattered to them the most. Additionally, my informants and I met and hung out together at different stores, coffee shops, restaurants, night clubs, and parks. I also spent time with some participants at their workplaces, learning about the challenges and opportunities they face in the United States as immigrant professionals. Some of my informants invited me to dinners and parties with their families and friends to help me also learn about the people who surround immigrants and enrich their experiences in a host society.

During participant observation, I also engaged my informants in ‘go-along’ interviews (Kusenbach, 2003). For these particular interviews, I did not have a specific list of questions, and they typically took the form of informal conversations. Engaging immigrants in informal discussions, I usually asked them to reflect on their experiences in the United States as well as on their connections to their places of origin. With some of my participants, I also watched or read Russian and U.S. media that focused specifically on the issues in U.S.-Russia relations. As we watched or read Russian and U.S. media, I also employed ‘go-along’ interviews looking for Russian immigrants’ perspectives on the media coverage of the political tensions between the two nations.

Participant observation with ‘go-along’ interviews were some of the most useful research methods for my work. By observing and communicating about immigrants’ daily activities and interactions, I not only built a stronger rapport with my informants but also constructed a more rounded image of my participants and the ways in which international politics permeate their transnational lives. As people let me into their homes and communities, I partially experienced and better understood the struggles, fears, and joys that Russian immigrants have as they navigate the transnational environment that is shaped by the political tensions between Russia and the United States.

I did not audio record conversations with my participants during ‘go-along’ interviews. However, I took field notes that helped me capture the moments that I observed and talked about

with my respondents. Just like in semi-structured interview transcriptions, in my field notes, I eliminated participants' names and other personal identifiers. To analyze data in field notes, I applied a six-step thematic analysis that I used to identify transcriptions collected through semi-structured interviews. This particular approach allowed me to trace both similarities and differences in my participants' lived experiences and their views on the nuances of their transnationalism.

1.2.6 Discourse Analysis

Since my study focuses on Russian immigrants' transnational experiences within the context of U.S.-Russia ties, the second chapter of my dissertation provides a more detailed discussion around the Ukrainian crisis and the alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election in 2016- the two political developments that have resulted in an extremely hostile environment between the two countries. To describe these events, I relied upon academic books, articles, media, and government reports. I also examined interviews and statements made by the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the former U.S. President Barack Obama to understand general sentiments that they shared toward the Ukrainian crisis and the Russian influences on the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Please see Appendix C for a list of statements and interviews examined.

The existence of the hostile environment is also clearly expressed in the mediatized discourse that Russian and U.S. political officials and media figures have been circulating in their respective societies since 2014. I developed this perspective by closely following Russian and U.S. media and by using a method of discourse analysis to understand how Russian and U.S. political and media elites portrayed each other's countries.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method that examines the use of language in written or verbal texts. "Text should be understood broadly to include anything that carries the discourse, such as images, performances, and so forth" (Dunn and Neumann, 2016, p. 3). This method has a wide-ranging analytical application, allowing researchers to interpret how actors use language as a tool of power to construct, represent, and attach meaning to a particular socio-cultural phenomenon, "giving the impression of 'truth'" (Dunn and Neumann, 2016, p. 3). Researchers recognize that discourse is never static and that it always changes depending on social contexts and actors themselves. Yet, by analyzing different representations of discourse

that circulates around us, researchers' main goal is to enhance our understanding of the world (Bax, 2010, Dunn and Neumann, 2016; Johnstone, 2018).

Discourse analysis, according to scholars, does not entail a rigid 'step-by-step procedure', which makes it a flexible tool for research (Wiggins & Riley, 2010). However, this method is guided by questions that a researcher develops when working with data. In my case, I developed specific questions to guide my analysis when I focused on the political discourse in Russian and U.S. media. Please see Appendix D for a list of questions that I used to analyze media data.

Using particular research questions, I surveyed 127 articles from Russian and U.S. newspapers. I analyzed articles published in Russian newspapers such as *Izvestia* [News] and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* [Russian Newspaper]. I also analyzed articles published in U.S. newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Additionally, I watched and analyzed Russian television news and analytical shows. For example, I watched Russian analytical talk-shows such as "Politika" [Politics] and "Vremya Pokazhet" [Time Will Tell] which air on *Pervyi Kanal* [Channel One]. I also watched "Večer s Vladimirom Solovyovym" [Evening with Vladimir Solovyev] which airs on *Rossia 1* [Russia 1] Russian television channel. These shows serve as platforms for academics, analysts, and politicians to debate Russia's domestic and foreign policies and affairs. As a native speaker of Russian, I myself translated data gathered from Russian media sources presented in this dissertation.

For my research, I also watched different news and talk shows produced by U.S. most popular television channels such as *CNN* (*Cable News Network*) and *Fox News*, which I retrieved from the *Internet Archive* and the video-sharing platform *YouTube*. Analyzing media data, I paid specific attention to how media outlets referred and represented Russia when discussing the Ukrainian crisis and Russia's impacts on the U.S. presidential election in 2016. I assess that I have watched and analyzed around 50 hours of video data. Appendices D and E provide a list of media data that I examined for my research.

Following Russian media and its focus on the Ukrainian crisis, I arrived at the conclusion that was similar to the one developed by Russian scholars Ivan Kurilla and Victoria I. Zhuravleva (2018). These scholars argue that beginning with 2014, Russian politicians and media have invested considerable efforts to advance a monolithic image of the United States as a global dictator that tries to undermine Russia's international significance. At the same time, I found that Russian political officials and media figures used Washington's accusations of

Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election to continue representing the United States as an oppressive global hegemon.

Analyzing U.S. media, I found that during the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, U.S. political and media elites depicted Russia as an aggressive country that must be punished by U.S. political leadership. Additionally, I observed that once U.S. authorities accused the Russian government of election interference in 2016, the political discourse coming from U.S. officials and media expanded to paint Russia as a threat to U.S. democratic political system and U.S. society.

While my research process has benefitted from Kurilla and Zhuravleva's work (2018), unfortunately, the authors did not provide specific examples to support the claim that Russian officials and media figures have portrayed the United States as a global dictator during the Ukrainian crisis. Therefore, I incorporate my analysis of the Russian and U.S. mediated discourse, including specific excerpts, in the second chapter of my dissertation to illuminate how strong the political antipathies have become between the two nations.

It is also important to note that all study participants commented on the role of U.S. and Russian politicians and media in today's U.S.-Russia bilateral ties. They all highlighted how media and politicians in both countries exacerbate rather than help solve the issues that persist in U.S.-Russia relations. Therefore, the secondary goal of the discourse analysis is to help contextualize Russian immigrants' views and perspectives on the role of political actors and media in the growing clash between their home and host countries.

1.3 Significance of the Study

In the past several decades, with the increase of the post-Soviet immigration to countries around the world, more and more academics have become interested in understanding post-Soviet immigrant experiences, including the experiences of Russian nationals in the United States. Some of the studies focus specifically on the challenges and opportunities that post-Soviet Russian immigrants encounter during the process of their economic, cultural, and social incorporation in U.S. society. Others have looked at Russian immigrants' ethnic and gender identity formation, intergenerational ties, body image developments, linguistic challenges, and issues relating to immigrant health that persist or emerge in a new cultural setting (Simon, 1997; Finckenauer & Waring, 1998; Shasha & Shron, 2002; Kishnevsky, 2004; Isurin, 2011; Sadowski-Smith, 2018). These studies, indeed, provide an invaluable insight into the lives of

Russian immigrants. The significance of my study, however, lies in the fact that it looks not only at Russian immigrants' experiences in U.S. society but also captures a transnational dimension of Russian immigration in the context of U.S.-Russia relations, a particular aspect of Russian transnationalism phenomenon that has not yet been documented by academic literature. Thus, by focusing on Russian transnational immigration and the ways in which it is shaped by the political tensions between the two nations, this study hopes to illuminate what it means to be a transnational Russian immigrant in a politicized transnational environment.

Moreover, using the case of this immigrant group, this study hopes to expand our understanding of immigrant transnationalism as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. On the one hand, this study illustrates that transnationalism, indeed, in many ways, enhances immigrants' life trajectories and allows them to pursue their numerous life goals not confined within the borders of one nation-state. On the other hand, it also shows that strained relations between immigrants' home and host countries impair transnational experiences and constrain immigrants from developing a full sense of simultaneous belonging to the two nations in which they live. By doing so, this study highlights the importance of looking beyond the notion of transnationalism as a phenomenon that only enriches immigrants' socio-cultural experiences. It is necessary to present more realistic immigration stories that reveal the challenges that immigrants face on their transnational journeys.

At the same time, by exploring how Russian immigrants engage with U.S.-Russia political tensions to improve relations between the two countries, this dissertation hopes to highlight the socio-cultural benefit of transnational immigration. Most often, when analysts explore the effects of immigration, they focus on the phenomenon of immigration surplus (Bergsten, 2005), calculating the economic gains that immigration brings both to sending and receiving states. In such reports and studies, immigrants are viewed primarily as economic actors that benefit national and global economies. However, the experiences of Russian immigrants to advance a cross-cultural dialogue between their home and host societies help us understand the significant role that transnational immigrants play in bringing the two conflicting nations together. Even when immigrants are unable to fully claim a simultaneous belonging to both nations, as transnational subjects, they still invest individual efforts to build a more peaceful cross-cultural interconnection between their home and host nations. Immigrants' actions remind

us about the importance of viewing immigration not only as an economic benefit but also as a critical mechanism for transnational peacebuilding.

An important aspect of this study that needs to be underlined is that it was conducted within a particular timeframe, in a specific geographic location, and with specific individuals. Therefore, as was mentioned previously, this project does not claim the generalizability of research findings because it does not capture the totality of Russian immigrant transnationalism. Moreover, not all data that I have collected during my research project are included in this dissertation. However, I contend that the lack of generalizability does not decrease the value of Russian immigrants' realities and voices that this research project highlights. In fact, by focusing on participants' individual experiences, as shaped by many societies and global processes, this study seeks to bring a more nuanced understanding of Russian immigrants' lives and their engagement with the world.

1.4 Chapter Organization

Chapter 2 of my dissertation focuses specifically on the deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations since 2014. This chapter will provide a more detailed account of the Ukrainian crisis and the interference of the Russian government in U.S. presidential election in 2016, addressing how the events that revolved around these two political developments have led to tensions between Moscow and Washington. The second chapter of this project will also incorporate a discourse analysis, which reveals the hostilities that have been advanced between Russia and the United States by Russian and U.S. political and media figures.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of my dissertation project focus on the accounts of the study participants, utilizing qualitative methods that were described in more detail above. Chapter 3 examines Russian immigrants' reasons for relocation to the United States. More specifically, it discusses economic, political, professional, and personal factors that have shaped the study participants' immigration decisions. Additionally, this chapter looks at immigrants' homeland ties to their families and friends back in Russia and discusses their civic engagement with Russian society. This chapter illustrates that Russian immigrants embrace their transnational living, which allows them to not only realize their professional and personal goals in the United States but also to fulfill their responsibilities they have back in Russia.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation focuses on Russian immigrants' narratives and accounts that illuminate how the deterioration of U.S.-Russia ties has impacted their lives, with a focus on their identities as transnational subjects. The main goal of this chapter is to argue that the tensions that have emerged between Russia and the United States hinder Russian immigrants from developing a transnational identity. Despite the fact that Russian immigrants build their lives between the two nations, they cannot claim a simultaneous sense of belonging in relation to Russia and the United States.

Chapter 5 examines Russian immigrants' individual efforts to improve U.S.-Russia relations. It analyzes informal dialogues and acts that Russian immigrants resort to, attempting to raise a greater understanding between the peoples of Russia and the United States. My goal here is to illuminate how immigrants' transnational form of life presents them with an opportunity to disrupt international tensions and promote peaceful relations between the two nations on an individual and informal basis.

The final chapter of my dissertation project reviews some of the main findings and themes discussed in previous chapters. It also analyzes what Russian immigrants and their experiences reveal about transnationalism as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Furthermore, this chapter looks at political developments in U.S.-Russia relations since summer 2019 and discusses my future research goals concerning Russian immigrants, transnationalism, and U.S.-Russia relations.

CHAPTER 2. DETERIORATION OF U.S.-RUSSIA POLITICAL TIES SINCE 2014

Relations between Russia and the United States have always been complex and contradictory. Much of the 20th century, for example, the two nations considered each other ideological, economic, and political opponents. It is necessary to note, however, that during the Second World War, the two countries fought as allies against German Nazism. However, with the end of the war, Russia and the United States engaged in a deliberate competition for global influence during a period of geopolitical confrontation that is known as the “Cold War” (Overy, 1995; Westad, 2017).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought an end to the Cold War period and motivated both Russian and U.S. political leaders to rapidly advance bilateral collaboration between the previously isolated nations. Every Russian president since 1991 visited the United States to hold discussions about the global significance of U.S.-Russia relations (see, e.g. “Boris Yeltsin Address”, 1992; Clark, 2010; Shoemaker, 2014). Similarly, every U.S. president during their presidency, except President Donald Trump, since the collapse of the Soviet Union made visits to Russia to demonstrate their willingness to work with the Russian government on issues ranging from economic partnership to global security (see, e.g., Clinton, 1994; Henry, 2009; Jeffries, 2011).

The goal to continue building stronger cooperation between Moscow and Washington was reinforced by the “Russian Reset,” a political approach launched by President Obama’s administration in 2009 (Meese, Nielsen, & Sondheimer, 2018). This initiative brought significant improvements to U.S.-Russia political ties. Both countries cooperated to reduce the number of nuclear weapons throughout the world and to fight global terrorism (Rojansky & Collins, 2010). They also worked jointly to find solutions to the challenges brought about by the global economic crisis of 2008 and to increase bilateral trade to boost national economies. To raise cross-cultural appreciation between the two nations, Russian and U.S. authorities have catalyzed the expansion of cultural programs developed around international arts, sports, media, and education (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2010).

Unfortunately, the improvements in U.S.-Russia relations did not hold out for longer than a few years. In fact, the bilateral cooperation began to worsen again when when Vladimir Putin

was elected president of the Russian Federation in 2012 (Meese, Nielsen, & Sondheimer, 2018). Putin also served as a president from 2000-2008. From 2008-2012, he served in capacity of a prime minister of Russia. Returning to presidency, some scholars claim, the Russian leader brought back his bold tactics to foreign policy issues. While the United States and Russia continued to work on issues such as global terrorism, nuclear weapons proliferation, and international conflicts, their joint cooperation evolved into a more challenging undertaking (Meese, Nielsen, & Sondheimer, 2018).

Since 2014, the political environment between Moscow and Washington has begun to rapidly deteriorate. This deterioration can be attributed to two significant political developments- Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis and annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election in 2016.

2.1 The Ukrainian Crisis and Annexation of Crimea

In November 2013, the Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych refused to sign an association agreement that would bring the Ukrainian society closer to membership in the European Union. Yanukovych's decision was influenced by the Russian political elite who offered Ukraine membership in the Eurasian Economic Union and financial assistance. Yanukovych's refusal to develop closer economic ties with the European Union resulted in the outbreak of mass anti-government protests in western and central regions of Ukraine. In February 2014, the sitting Ukrainian president was overthrown, and a new Ukrainian government gained the power to rule the Ukrainian state (DeFonzo, 2018; Meese, Nielsen, & Sondheimer, 2018).

Such political transformations led to social discontent in the Crimean Peninsula, a territory of Ukraine with a large ethnic Russian population, where people spoke out against the newly established Ukrainian regime (Katchanovski, 2015). In March 2014, Crimean officials organized a referendum encouraging residents to vote for the future of their region. Crimean residents had to decide either to maintain an autonomous status within Ukraine's territory or to become a part of the Russian Federation. 97% of voters chose to become part of the Russian nation (Roberts, 2015).

The new Ukrainian government denied the legitimacy of the Crimean referendum. Furthermore, it accused Russia of violating the Ukraine's territorial sovereignty. The U.S.

political leadership and the broader international community openly supported the regime change in Ukraine and rejected the results of the Crimean referendum, claiming that it was held under Russia's military control (Menon & Rumer, 2015). Concerned with Russian geopolitical expansionism, the United States strongly condemned Russia's attacks on Ukraine's territory, insisting that the people of Ukraine have the right to determine their political fate. Delivering his statement on Ukraine on March 20, 2014, President Obama expressed his discontent with Russia's military involvement in the Ukrainian territory and emphasized that Russia must recognize the sovereignty of an independent nation. Obama said:

Over the last several days, we've continued to be deeply concerned by events in Ukraine. We've seen an illegal referendum in Crimea, an illegitimate move by the Russians to annex Crimea, and dangerous risks of escalation, including threats to Ukrainian personnel in Crimea and threats to southern and eastern Ukraine as well. These are all choices that the Russian government has made -- choices that have been rejected by the international community, as well as the government of Ukraine. And because of these choices, the United States is today moving, as we said we would, to impose additional costs on Russia.

The Russian people need to know, and Mr. Putin needs to understand that the Ukrainians shouldn't have to choose between the West and Russia. We want the Ukrainian people to determine their own destiny, and to have good relations with the United States, with Russia, with Europe, with anyone that they choose. And that can only happen if Russia also recognized the rights of all the Ukrainian people to determine their future as free individuals, and as a sovereign nation -- rights that people and nations around the world understand and support (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014).

The absorption of Crimea into the Russian territory was a truly significant event for the Russian nation. President Vladimir Putin rationalized the annexation as Russia's "sacred right to protect fellow ethnics wherever they felt threatened" (Stent, 2015, p.292). Crimea, it is important to point out, was a part of the Soviet Russian territory until 1954, when Nikita Khrushchev, a leader of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964 (Mlechin, 2014), gifted it to Soviet Ukraine (Svyatets, 2016). Moreover, to push back against U.S. opposition to the developments in Crimea, Putin argued that the Crimean referendum could be compared to an independence referendum that took place in Kosovo in 1991 and which the United States supported. In his address to State Duma and the Federation Council on March 18, 2014, Putin explained:

I do not like to resort to quotes, but in this case, I cannot help it. Here is a quote from another official document: the Written Statement of the United States of America of April 17, 2009, submitted to the same U.N. International Court in

connection with the hearings on Kosovo. Again, I quote: “Declarations of independence may, and often do, violate domestic legislation. However, this does not make them violations of international law.” End of quote. They wrote this, disseminated it all over the world, had everyone agree, and now they are outraged. Over what? The actions of the Crimean people completely fit in with these instructions, as it were. For some reason, things that Kosovo Albanians (and we have full respect for them) were permitted to do, Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars in Crimea are not allowed. Again, one wonders why. (“Address”, 2014)

The political crisis in Ukraine did not end with Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Pro-Russian protests sprung in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine against the new political leadership and gradually turned into a military conflict between the separatist groups and the new Ukrainian government. The Ukrainian administration accused Russian authorities of backing separatists militarily (Menon & Rumer, 2015). The United States maintained its support for the Ukrainian government, urging Russia to respect Ukraine’s right for self-determination. Convinced that Russia must face penalties for its intrusion into the Ukrainian territory, the United States and the broader international community imposed severe sanctions against Russia. These sanctions targeted individual Russian politicians and the country’s economic, military, and energy sectors (Myers and Baker, 2014; U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Center 2014).

The Russian government was discontented with international measures, which they found to be unfair and baseless. Moreover, Moscow introduced counter-sanctions against several European countries and the United States. Russian leadership banned some U.S. politicians from visiting Russia and restricted agricultural products, raw materials, and food imports from the United States (“Ukaz,” 2014).

Besides introducing sanctions against Washington, the Russian government decided to restrict U.S. cultural influence in Russian society. Since 2014, “many American organizations in Russia became the victims of the general campaign against ‘foreign agents’” (Kurilla & Zhuravleva, 2018, p.130). Russian government ended an educational exchange program, *The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program*, which enabled Russian high school students to study in the United States for one academic year. Moreover, the American Center at the Russian State Library and the MacArthur Foundation were forced to stop their operation in Moscow, although both of these institutions provided services to Russian citizens for over 20 years. As Kurilla and Zhuravleva (2018) explain:

The intention to reduce American cultural influence on Russian society-especially among the youth and intelligentsia who participated in the exchange programs and were constant visitors of such an organization like the American Center-could be considered a symbol of large-scale cultural war for minds, one of the main facets of the crisis in bilateral relations. (p.130)

2.1. 1 Political Discourse in Russian and U.S. Media on the Ukrainian Crisis and Crimea

The political tensions that escalated in U.S.-Russia relations shaped not only the views and the actions of Russian and U.S. state leaders but also the broader political discourse that mass media in both countries helped produce and circulate in their respective societies. In covering the Ukrainian crisis and the Crimean referendum, Russian and U.S. analysts, political officials, and media figures advanced primarily a negative image of each other's countries, fostering an antagonistic environment between the two nations.

As soon as Crimea was absorbed into the Russian territory, Russian media outlets actively promoted the notion that, despite hostile opposition from the United States, becoming a part of Russia was a will of the Crimean people that was supported by the entire Russian nation. Political experts, commentators, and journalists not only framed Crimea's absorption into Russia as "reunification of Crimea with Russia" but also frequently discussed it as a historical event and a form of justice that both Russian and Crimean people desired for decades. Statements such as "We are beginning to build a great Russia," "It is a historical moment," and "It's a real victory" (see, e.g., "Politika," 2014) were consistently circulated in Russian media to fuel victorious and celebratory emotions in Russian society.

In the political discussions that equated Crimean absorption into the Russian territory to a political victory, America's opposition to Russia's decision was characterized as a direct evidence of the U.S. attempts to maintain control over global society. In televised political talk-shows, for example, the United States was described as a country that wants to retain its global dictate (Kurilla & Zhurvaleva, 2018), to subordinate today's Russia, and to advance its national interests and financial profits, dismissing the interests of other nations (see, e.g., "Politika", 2014a; "Vecher," 2014; "Vecher," 2014a; "Vecher," 2014b; "Vecher," 2014c). Russia, however, was often portrayed as a strong global player that can defend its national interests, even if that means going against U.S. ambitions to control other nations. According to Russian political discourse, contemporary Russia is the main, if not the only, political force that has the capacity

to challenge U.S. objectives of global domination (see, e.g., “Politika,” 2014a; “Vecher,” 2014; “Vecher,” 2014a, “Vecher,” 2014b; “Vecher,” 2014c).

An opinion piece “Rossiya Vozvrashayetsya v Istoriyu” [Russia Returns back to History] by a Russian publicist Igor Karaulov (2014) published in *Izvestia* newspaper represents one such example in which the United States is portrayed as a dictatorial power. The piece presents Karaulov’s reflections on the Ukrainian crisis. The author claims that the reunification of Crimea with Russia became “an emergency rescue operation,” which Russian authorities undertook expecting no benefits in return. Praising Vladimir Putin for his leadership, Karaulov described him as a leader of the free world – “the world that stood up against the hateful, fake and the empty U.S. dictate.” Today’s Russia, according to Karaulov, promotes and supports democratic processes such as the Crimean referendum, while the United States “for the past several decades has not brought neither democracy, nor security, nor well-being to a single nation.”

While Russian political discussions reflected strong anti-American sentiments that were disseminated in Russian society, U.S. mediatized political discourse brought to light American antipathies toward Russia’s political stances. Many Russia-centered interviews and panel discussions held by U.S. political and media elites focused specifically on Vladimir Putin and his decisions concerning Ukraine, framing him as a villain who desires great power (see, e.g., The O’Reilly Factor, 2014a; The O’Reilly Factor, 2014b; Obama, 2014). At the same time, covering and analyzing geopolitical shifts in the post-Soviet space, political and media figures repeatedly talked about Russia in general terms, describing its involvement in Ukraine as invasion (Dedova, 2010) and acts of violence expressed through military force. In different U.S. news outlets, for instance, Russia was described as a country that ignores the international community and international law (see, e.g., McFaul, 2014; Garton Ash, 2014; 2014; Somin, 2014). Russia has also been accused of being an “anti-Western power with a different, darker vision of global politics” (Applebaum, 2014). Depictions such as “Russia is an aggressor” emerged in U.S. political conversations, encouraging a homogeneous view of Russia as a dangerous nation-state (see, e.g., Brzezinski, 2014; Blow, 2014; “Russia’s aggression”, 2014).

To illustrate the intensity of their disapproval of Russia’s actions, U.S. political experts and journalists often called upon the U.S. government to punish Russia for its aggressive and unlawful behavior, insisting on the idea that international punishment is what Russia deserves. In fact, it was frequently implied that diplomacy does not work with Russia and more sanctions or

other types of force should be used against the post-Soviet aggressor. Consider, for instance, a guest appearance of the Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters, a Fox News strategic analyst, on the “O’Reilly Factor” that aired on *Fox News* in March 2014. During his discussion around the issue of the Ukrainian crisis, the Lieutenant Colonel not only condemned Russia for its attacks on the neighboring state but has also suggested the ways in which Russia should pay for its action on the Ukrainian territory. He said:

Sometimes you have to lead. This is one of those times. I will tell you there are three things that President Obama can do and should do. One, stop pretending negotiations will solve all the world’s problems. I mean, Vladimir Putin is playing games and we are playing downtown abbey. The second thing Obama needs to renounce and abrogate the strategic arms reduction treaty that he gave to Vladimir Putin as a gift to Russia. That would get Putin’s attention because Putin’s military is really hollow, and they have real financial problems. The third thing and we could do this unilaterally if we had to. I want Europe on board, but they are timid and afraid of using money, broad, deep sanctions that will really bite. (“The O’Reilly Factor”, 2014)

The propositions that Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters made were also echoed in the U.S. newspaper outlets. The article “The U.S. Should Keep Tightening the Sanctions on Russia” by the editorial board (2014) of the *Washington Post* represents one such example. On the one hand, the article praised Obama’s leadership in dealing with “Russian aggression” and for imposing sanctions on Putin’s “inner circle of financiers and cronies” and “Russian economic sectors (“The U.S. Should,” 2014). On the other hand, the *Washington Post* argued that “the U.S. sanctions still fall far short of what is needed to inflict the ‘massive’ damage to the Russian economy” (“The U.S. Should,” 2014). Suggesting that it may be necessary to expand sanctions against Russia, the *Washington Post* underlined that the West has more power to penalize the opponent for its behavior,

Mr. Putin and his political elite appear drunk with euphoria over their successful seizure of Crimea and skeptical about the West’s will to push back. If the latest sanctions do not quickly sober them up, Mr. Obama must not hesitate to expand the range of sanctions from Mr. Putin’s inner circle to the pillars of the Russian economy. (“The U.S. Should,” 2014)

Antagonisms fed to Russian and U.S. audiences in the two countries worked to exacerbate the tensions between the two national powers. Additionally, the tragic incident with the MH17 plane that took place in July 2014 further deepened the hostile environment between Russia and the United States during the Ukrainian crisis. MH17 was a Malaysia Airlines

passenger flight that departed Amsterdam, Netherlands, to head to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The plane was shot down over the territory of eastern Ukraine. All passengers and crew members of the plane, a total of 298 people, died. Investigation of the incident concluded that the aircraft was shot down by a surface-to-air missile, which was launched from the Ukrainian territory controlled by the pro-Russian separatist groups (Davidson & Yuhas, 2014; Tavernise, Schmitt & Gladstone, 2014; Yekelchuk, 2014).

U.S. officials immediately put the responsibility for the tragedy on the Russian government because the missile that shot down the plane was transported to separatists from Russia. In his statement to the press at the White House on July 18, 2014, Obama expressed his support to the families of the deceased passengers and crew members. Highlighting that the United States continues to stand with the Ukrainian people, Obama accused Russia of not taking the necessary measures to stop violence on the Ukrainian territory. He stated:

Moreover, time and again, Russia has refused to take the concrete steps necessary to deescalate the situation. I spoke to President Putin yesterday in the wake of additional sanctions that we had imposed. He said he wasn't happy with them, and I told him that we have been very clear from the outset that we want Russia to take the path that would result in peace in Ukraine, but so far at least, Russia has failed to take that path. Instead, it has continued to violate Ukrainian sovereignty and to support violent separatists. It has also failed to use its influence to press the separatists to abide by a cease-fire. That's why, together with our allies, we've imposed growing costs on Russia. (Hudson, 2014)

Russian authorities, however, claimed that the party that has to be held accountable for the tragedy was the new Ukrainian government. Addressing the downing of MH17 during the meeting with his administration on July 17, 2014, Putin, for example, stressed that the tragedy would not have taken place "if there had been peace in the country, and, in any case, if military operations had not resumed in the south-east of Ukraine. And there is no doubt that the country on whose territory this terrible tragedy happened bears responsibility" ("R.T. na Russkom," 2014).

Unfortunately, the horror of the MH17 plane crash did not end the war in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, and the military operations there continue till today. In fact, as the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2018) reported, during the period of 2014-2018, the war in Ukraine has left almost 13 thousand people dead. Moreover,

over 2 million Ukrainians have been “displaced from their homes” due to the military actions that have devastated the lives of the Ukrainian people (“Ukraine Refugee Crisis,” n.d.”).

The Ukrainian crisis has, indeed, done considerable damage to U.S.-Russia political ties. Till today numerous U.S. officials continue to condemn Russia’s annexation of Crimea and Russian military support for the separatist groups. However, the Ukrainian crisis was not the only geopolitical development that has brought discord to U.S.-Russia relations. The tensions in U.S.-Russia bilateral partnerships have also strengthened after the U.S. government accused Russia of interfering in the U.S. presidential election in 2016.

2.2 Russia’s Interference in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

On June 14, 2016, the *Washington Post* published an article by Ellen Nakashima (2016) in which the author reported that the “Russian government hackers penetrated the computer network of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and gained access to the entire database of opposition research on the GOP [Republican Party] presidential candidate Donald Trump.” The article informed the public that the DNC network has been accessible to hackers for about a year and that Russian spies have attacked the networks of two presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

On July 22, 2016, WikiLeaks, a media organization that was founded by Julian Assange in 2006, released over 44,000 emails that belonged to the members of the DNC (“Search,” n.d.). Numerous DNC officials claimed that it was the Russian government that helped Julian Assange acquire their electronic communication (Hensch, 2016). These emails, according to media reports, revealed DNC’s internal preference for Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders, a Vermont senator who was also running for the U.S. presidency in 2016 (Hamburger & Tumulty, 2016). As Amy Chozick (2016) stressed in the *New York Times*, “The hacking embarrassed party officials by showing that they seemed to favor Hillary Clinton over Senator Bernie Sanders in the primary when they were supposed to be neutral.”

The Department of the United States Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Election Security were convinced that the Russian government meddled in the U.S. internal affairs. In October 2016, they released a joint statement claiming that the Russian officials were directly connected to email leaks by WikiLeaks and two other Internet projects such as DCLeaks.com and Guccifer 2.0. The agencies insisted that “The recent

disclosures of alleged hacked emails...are consistent with the methods and motivations of Russian-directed efforts” and that “the Russians have used similar tactics and techniques across Europe and Eurasia, for example, to influence public opinion there” (“Homeland Security,” 2016).

In November 2016, Donald Trump won the U.S. presidential election. Although the higher number of Americans cast their votes for Hillary Clinton (Krieg, 2016), Trump won the Electoral College. He received 304 votes from the Electoral College, while Hillary Clinton garnered 227 votes (Cushion & Thomas, 2018).

Soon after the election, while still serving in the Oval Office, Obama requested the U.S. intelligence community to continue looking deeper into Russia’s campaign to disrupt the presidential race. Obama claimed that a weak country like Russia, with the “economy [that] doesn’t produce anything,” and where people “don’t innovate,” could not, in substantial ways, threaten or change U.S. society and culture (“Transcript,” 2016). At the same time, Obama had no doubts that Russia’s government was behind the cyberattacks. To retaliate against Moscow’s interference in the U.S. domestic affairs, Obama’s administration imposed new sanctions against Russia. At the end of December of 2016, the U.S. government expelled 35 Russian diplomats and closed two Russian compounds in the states of New York and Maryland (Sanger, 2016; Mazetti & Schmidt, 2016).

In January 2017, the U.S. intelligence community released another assessment of Russian cyber activities. The new report pointed out that it was specifically Vladimir Putin who orchestrated Russian cyberattacks to not only discredit Hillary Clinton but also to help Donald Trump win the presidential race. “Russia will attempt to influence future political developments in the United States and worldwide,” (“Office,” 2017, p.5) the intelligence community claimed in an attempt to stress the threat that Russia poses to the global community.

Because it was revealed that the Russian government attempted to help Donald Trump win the election, the Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed the former FBI director Robert S. Mueller III to continue the investigation into the Russian meddling. Most importantly, Mueller was assigned to investigate the possible collusion between the Russian government and Donald Trump’s campaign (Ruiz & Landler, 2017). During his investigation, Mueller indicted 25 Russian nationals who were believed to be connected to Russia’s attempts to influence the 2016 election outcomes (Jansen, Vanden Brook, Johnson & Cummings, 2019). Additionally, he

indicted the Internet Research Agency (IRA) based in Saint-Petersburg, Russia, also known as a troll farm. The IRA was believed to be a Russian state-supported agency that deliberately created thousands of fake accounts on social media platforms to influence U.S. public opinion with the end goal of elevating Trump's candidacy in the presidential run (DiResta et al., n.d.).

Mueller's investigation lasted for almost two years and concluded in March 2019. His ultimate findings did not reveal any direct evidence that Trump's campaign and the Russian government worked jointly to ensure Trump's victory. However, the investigation maintained that the Russian government interfered in the U.S. presidential election to help Trump win the presidency (Mazetti & Benner, 2019; Robertson, Gore, & McDonald, 2019; Mueller, 2019).

While Washington was trying to convince the American people that Russia interfered in the U.S. presidential election, the Russian state officials have consistently denied the accusations by calling them speculative and without any specific evidence. The Russian government insisted that it had never attempted to change the course of the presidential race between Clinton and Trump and must not be accused of meddling in the internal political developments of the United States. Putin personally opposed the allegations referring to them as America's "made-up problem" (Zarubin, 2016). Here is, for instance, what Putin said about the accusations during his participation in the *Valdai* international discussion club in October 2016.

I cannot say it differently, about Russia's influence on the course of the current election of the American President. Interestingly, the United States definitely has many acute, many pressing problems-from a colossal national debt to the increasing resort to gun violence and facts of police brutality. And, probably, during the course of election, the conversation should be exactly about that and other unresolved problems. But, the elite doesn't have much to say, there is nothing to calm the society with. That's why it is much easier to distract people's attention to the so-called Russian hackers, spies, agents of influence, and so forth and so on. I want to ask a question and ask you this question: Does anyone seriously think that Russia can influence the choice of the American people? Is American some kind of a "banana republic?" America is a great power. If I am wrong, please correct me. (Zarubin, 2016)

Whenever Putin was asked to address America's allegations, he continued to challenge the assertions of election interference. In March 2018, in an interview with *NBC*, Putin not only claimed that the Russian government made no attempts to influence the results of the 2016 U.S. election but also accused the United States of trying to interfere in Russian domestic affairs. He said:

I would like for you to hear me and to let your audience and listeners know what I will say. We discuss with our American friends and partners, including with state representatives and say, when they make claims to us that some Russians interfered in U.S. election, we tell them-recently, on a high level: but you always interfere into our political life. And you know what, they don't even deny it. What did they answer the last time? They said to us: Yes, we interfere, but we have the right to do so because we bring democracy, and you don't, and you can't. Do you think this is a civilized, modern position of the issue in international relations? ("President", 2018)

2.2.1 Political Discourse on Russian Meddling in U.S. and Russian Media

The accusations that Russia interfered in U.S. election in 2016 also served as reasons for U.S. political figures and media outlets to continue pushing forward a political discourse that positioned Russia as a hostile nation-state. If during the Ukrainian crisis U.S. political and media elites portrayed Russia as an aggressive violator of international law, now the discourse expanded to describe Russia as a country that wants to harm American society and to undermine American democracy. Julie Pace, for example, is one of the journalists who depicted Russia as a nation-state seeking to impact U.S. society. Pace was invited to "Sunday with Chris Wallace" on *Fox News* in September 2016 to address Russia's election interference. Pace argued that by meddling in the U.S. internal affairs, Russia's goal was to disrupt U.S. democracy by creating distrust in U.S. society toward the American election process. Pace said:

The question of what Russia is trying to do, though, here is fairly obvious. They are trying to create uncertainty in this election, in the process, and ultimately in results...I think the idea of creating chaos in American democracy might be the end because if you really think about this idea, no matter what happens in our electoral campaigns, we are generally confident that the outcome was accurate and correct, and if they can create some uncertainty just around the process and create just nervousness, maybe that is just their end. ("Fox News," 2016)

A similar line of thought was echoed in statements made by Elijah Cummings, a member of the U.S. House of Representative, when he was invited to *CNN's* "New Day" in December 2016 to discuss what Russia's actions meant for the U.S. political culture. Sharing his views on Russia's meddling in the U.S. election, Cummings not only compared Russia's actions to 9/11 attacks but also stated that they represent an attack on U.S. democratic institutional structure. Cummings stated:

The fact is there has been hacking by the Russians. We are clear on that. It goes up

to the highest-ranking of the Russian government. We are clear on that. This is like, the former CIA director said this is like 9/11 for us. And we should be addressing it in a very serious and it must be in an independent way. That's why congressman Swalwell and I have proposed legislation or put forth legislation to make this more of a 9/11 type commission actually to look at what is going on... I have said it for weeks that this is the struggle for the soul of our democracy. I mean, we are seeing all of our institutions being attacked, even our election system, the FBI, the CIA, and so there is a real crisis of legitimacy. ("CNN," 2016)

The notion that Russia represents a threat to U.S. society and U.S. democracy was actively promoted on U.S. television news. At the same time, U.S. online newspapers have also participated in pushing forward the framing of Russia as a country that has started a cyberwar against its old rival. Numerous articles circulated in U.S. media space in which authors argued that by interfering in the U.S. election, Russia's goal was to cause damage to U.S. society and to subvert the American democratic system.

An October 2016 article in the *New York Times*, "Let's Get Putin's Attention," by Thomas L. Friedman, is one example of a journalistic portrayal of Russia as a destructive country that seeks to damage U.S. democracy. In his piece, Friedman recounted how Putin's global actions created tragedies in the lives of Russian and Ukrainian people. He also addressed how Putin's support of Syria's Bashar al-Assad has contributed to the refugee crisis in the Middle East. At the same time, Friedman framed Russia's interference in the U.S. presidential election as a threat to the U.S. democratic system. Friedman (2016) wrote:

Russia's hacking of America's Democratic Party — and signs that Russian or other cyberwarriors have tried to break into American state voter registration systems — suggests that Putin or other cyber disruptors are trying to undermine the legitimacy of our next national election. Together, these actions pose a threat to the two pillars of global democracy and open markets — America and the E.U. — more than anything coming from ISIS or Al Qaeda.

Clearly, the goal of the U.S. political discourse was to persuade the American public that Russia is the adversary of the United States. Russian mediatized political discourse, however, actively challenged Washington's accusatory claims. Relying on statements made by Putin and other high-level officials, Russian online news outlets consistently reported that Moscow denies any connection to the cyberattacks directed to impact the result of the U.S. presidential race (see, e.g., Dulman, 2016; Latuhina, 2016; Kogalov, 2018).

In addition, in different political shows broadcast on Russian television channels, Russian officials, political experts, and journalists used the saga of Russia's interference in the U.S. election to continue advancing the image of the United States as a global hegemon. To discredit Washington's accusations as hypocritical, political and media figures discussed U.S. invasion of Iraq and intervention in countries such as Libya and Syria to accentuate U.S. hegemonic actions throughout the world. The aim of the Russian political discourse was to represent the United States as the real global dictator and a real intruder in the domestic affairs of other nations (see, e.g., "Komu Nuzhna Horoshaya Rossiya?" 2016; "Vecher," 2016).

In one such example, Irina Yarovaya, Russian State Duma deputy, appeared on the political show "Vecher s Solovyovym" [Evening with Solovyov] to argue that the United States continues to adopt and practice the policy of global domination. Yarovaya claimed that U.S.-Russia relations continue to play a significant role in global security, but the two countries have significantly different goals. "Russia offers parity, equal rights, equal and indivisible with security sovereignty," Yarovaya stated, "while the United States during the whole postwar period offers a policy of domination, and policy of positioning itself as a global center, managing all geopolitical processes." Asserting that the U.S. will continue "to dictate development processes in the world," Yarovaya also suggested that Russia needs to maintain the position that it has and not to be afraid to "cool down the hot ambitions and hot weapons of the United States" ("Vecher," 2016).

By looking at the state of affairs and the antagonistic sentiments that Russia and the United States have shared toward each other, journalists, geopolitical experts, and foreign policy analysts throughout the world have claimed that the deterioration of U.S.-Russia ties represents a new Cold War (Lucas, 2014; Kalb, 2015). Others, however, have challenged the idea that the strenuous environment between the two nations should be viewed through the new Cold War prism. Experts have argued that the present U.S.-Russia relations differ in fundamental ways from the relations that existed between the two nation-states during the actual Cold War in the twentieth century. The United States and Russia are not involved in the struggles of a global scale. Russia is no longer an isolated player in the global economy (Stent, 2015), and shares no "global ambitions of the Soviet Union" (O'Hanlon & Zeigler, 2019). While there are apparent tensions and disagreements between Moscow and Washington officials, these tensions should

not be characterized as the new Cold War as the two countries continue to work together on many economic and global security issues (Stent, 2015; O'Hanlon & Zeigler, 2019).

2.3 Conclusion

While it may not be obvious whether today's U.S.-Russia relations should be called a new Cold War, one aspect that is clear about these relations is that neither country is content with how the opposite state leads its foreign affairs. The United States remains troubled by Russia's engagement in the Ukrainian crisis and Russia's attempts to impact U.S. political culture. Russia, on the other hand, sees the United States as a force that seeks to dominate the world and to weaken Russian society.

Another aspect that is evident in U.S.-Russia bilateral ties is that U.S. and Russian officials and media remain the most visible players in the political crisis between Russia and the United States. However, politicians and the media in both states are not the only actors who are significantly affected by the political discord that impacts both countries. Russian immigrants who build their lives between Russia and the United States are similarly troubled by the deteriorations that have been developing between their home and host nations since 2014.

In the following chapters of this dissertation, I focus specifically on the stories and the lived experiences of Russian immigrants. I first discuss the social and individual factors that have motivated Russian immigrants to come to the United States, highlight the adjustment experience of this immigrant group. I then address how U.S.-Russia relations influence Russian immigrants and their transnational realities.

By exploring immigrant experiences, I seek to not only expand our understanding of Russian nationals in the United States but also to highlight the fact that transnational migration and international politics are interconnected processes that shape immigrants' lives. As immigrants become affected by the troubled U.S.-Russia political ties, they cannot remain indifferent and undertake small-scale efforts to improve the relations between their home and host nations. Russian immigrants seek stability and security not only in their transnational journeys but also in the lives of larger Russian and U.S. societies.

CHAPTER 3. COMING TO THE UNITED STATES AND REMAINING TRANSNATIONAL

Immigration is a complex and dynamic global phenomenon. It can easily alter the entire course of life of people who decide to embark on the immigration journey as well as the lives of their descendants. It also changes the demographic, economic, and socio-political environments of sending and receiving states. But what factors contribute to immigrants' decision to relocate to another country? Do immigrants continue to stay connected to their country of origin? And if so, what compels immigrant individuals to maintain connections to their homeland? These are the questions that I raise in this chapter as I explore the lived experiences of Russian immigrants in the United States.

The present chapter draws on in-depth interviews with study participants. The accounts that I collected during fieldwork provide a more complex picture of Russian immigrants and their decisions for immigration. They reveal that a combination of different factors encouraged each participant to start a new life in a new country. These factors include economic hardships and political issues that immigrants have encountered in their homeland. Moreover, Russian nationals came to the U.S. to enhance their professional and personal lives and to experience a different culture.

Focusing on immigration journeys of my study participants, I also discuss numerous homeland relations that immigrants maintain to Russia. I illustrate that Russian immigrants have never intended to cut their ties to their communities of origin. To fulfill their social responsibilities, immigrants remain connected to their families and friends living in Russia. They also stay civically engaged with Russian society by following social, economic, and political developments in their homeland.

Before I turn to the accounts which provide a background of Russian immigrants whose experiences are at the center of my work, I provide a brief historical overview of Russian immigration to the United States. By doing so, I show that Russian immigration is a phenomenon that has connected Russian and U.S. societies for over two centuries. Today's Russian immigrants help sustain this historical and transnational process.

3.1 Russian Immigration to the United States: A Brief Historical Overview

Mapping the history of Russian immigration to the United States, it is clear that every wave of Russian immigrants represents an intricate experience. Russians, for instance, were the first European group to explore the territory of Alaska where they founded the Russian colony in 1784. Shortly after, the colonizers established numerous settlements in areas spreading from Alaska to California to maintain a fur trade and to provide housing for missionaries who came to forge the Russian Orthodox religion in local communities (Gold, 2007).

Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867. As a geographer Susan Wiley Hardwick (1993) has observed, the Russian domination of Alaska for over a century was “a typical example of colonial imperialism” (p.50). Similar to European colonizers such as Spain and England, Russian settlers sought to expand their territory and to take over resources of the colonized lands. At the same time, most of the Russian workers who helped colonize Alaska were not the actual settlers. Rather, they were regular employees of the Russian-American Company which controlled the “economic and spiritual” (p.57) life of the newly-formed colonies. These workers did not plan on settling in the colonized territory permanently. In fact, once the United States purchased Alaska, most of the laborers returned to their homeland.

Some Russians, however, remained in the United States and moved to California in search of new economic prospects. During the same time, Russian religious minorities such as the Dukhobors, Molokans, and the Old believers, also began immigrating to the United States to escape religious persecution in the Russian empire (Ionzev, Lebedeva, Nazarov, & Okorokov, 2001). According to Gold (2007), around 5000 Molokans “entered California between 1904 and 1912” (p.581).

Besides California, Russian immigrants began settling in the East Coast and in the Midwestern states in the late 19th and early 20th century. Most of these immigrants represented a class of peasants whose immigration to the new land was driven by economic imperatives. The development of industries in the United States in the early 20th century required a cheap workforce. Without many available options, Russian immigrants readily offered their labor for lower pay (Hardwick, 1993). Some Russians found employment in industrial mills, meatpacking, construction, railroad, and food processing industries (Gold, 2007). Others organized communities around local churches and peasant brotherhood and established agricultural colonies in different states where they lived as farmers (Gold, 2007; Ionzev et al., 2001).

Scholars have reported that between 1861 and 1915, over four million of Russian emigrants relocated to the countries of the New World, primarily to the United States (Ionzev et al., 2001). Over 40% of this group were immigrants of the Russian Jewish background. Russian Jews had to escape imperial Russia due to severe discrimination and persecution that they experienced as a minority group. The Russian government prohibited the Jewish community from settling on many different territories of the Russian empire. Moreover, in 1886-1887, the Russian government established regulations that limited Russian Jews in their rights to apply to higher educational institutions (Ionzev et al., 2001). Such structural violence forced the Jewish community to look for a better life outside of the Russian borders. When this immigrant group arrived in the United States, many were already well-educated and possessed varied skill sets. Due to their educational background and work experiences, many successfully gained access to economically viable professions and created pathways to the American middle class (Gold, 2007).

Another wave of Russians came to the United States shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War which lasted from 1918 to 1920. These two events played a significant role in the Russian emigration of the early 20th century. Although Europe was one of the primary destinations for most emigrants, 30,000 Russians relocated specifically to the United States (Gold, 2007). The majority of immigrants who were pushed out of Russia by the Bolshevik Revolution belonged to the Russian aristocracy. They fled their homeland to avoid prosecution for their antagonism toward the newly established Soviet regime (Gold, 2007; Isurin, 2011). In the United States, however, these immigrants had to take low paid employment to survive. The aristocratic background did not shield these immigrants from economic and cultural barriers in a new country.

One point that has to be underlined is that Russian immigrants in the United States experienced an attack on their community in the early 1920s. During a period that is known in history as the first “Red Scare,” U.S. state officials strongly opposed the Soviet Russia’s communist regime and were fearful that the community political consciousness and labor organizations would increase in U.S. society. To stop communism from spreading across the nation, the United States Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer initiated what is known as the Palmer’s raids. The Bureau of Investigation funded Palmer’s initiatives “to combat domestic radicalism” (Clark, 2012, p. 665). During the raids, federal agents intruded into Russian

American communities and deported their members, including immigrant workers, whom they considered dangerous subjects who could infiltrate and change the American political landscape.

In the late 1920s, emigration from the newly formed Soviet Union began to decelerate. For almost four decades, from the 1930s until the 1970s, a totalitarian political regime prohibited Soviet citizens from leaving the Soviet Union. Soviet nationals, whose lives were always regulated by the Soviet officials, were forced to obtain special permission from the state to travel overseas as tourists (Isurin, 2011). Moreover, the Cold War that began between the United States and the Soviet Union at the end of the 1940s made it nearly impossible for Soviet citizens to leave their nation for the rival country.

It is important to note that after the end of the Second World War, the United States assisted refugees and other immigrants from the war-torn Europe to relocate to the United States and integrate into U.S. society. Thus, from the late 1940s and through the 1950s, over 140 thousand Soviets came to live in the United States on a permanent basis. These were mostly displaced nationals who never returned to the Soviet Union once the Second World War ended (Golovkin, 2017). At the same time, despite the fact that United States and the Soviet Union cooperated as allies during World War II, U.S. government remained in opposition to the Soviet community political and economic orientations. In the aftermath of the Second World War, political tensions between Russia and U.S. officials began to deepen because of the rapid expansion of the Soviet influences across Eastern Europe. U.S. government was once again highly fearful of the spread of communism worldwide, raising anti-communist sentiments within U.S. national community. The anti-communist hysteria during the Cold War has had a damaging effect on the Russian diaspora in the United States. Perceived as transnational extensions of the Soviet state, Russians were viewed as communists or socialists and were also “considered to be both un-American and dangerous” (Gold, 2007, p.583).

Beginning in the 1970s and then throughout the 1980s, mobility regulations of the Soviet citizens started to gradually change. It is during this period that a new generation of Russian immigrants entered the U.S. for a better life abroad. This immigrant group consisted primarily of the Russian Jews who were accepted in the United States in the status of refugees. The communist revolution improved the lives of the Russian Jewish community to some extent, giving them access to education and the opportunity to settle in major cities. However, despite such improvements, this religious and ethnic minority group continued to face discrimination in

the Soviet republics (Isurin, 2011). In search of a more secure and stable life, over a million Russian Jews immigrated to the United States from the 1970s through the 1990s.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 intensified emigration from the former Soviet republics, with the United States continuing to admit a significant number of Russian nationals (Ryazantsev & Pismennaya, 2016). According to U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services, U.S. authorities admitted 8, 857 Russian immigrants in 1992. This number almost doubled in 1994 when 15, 249 Russian immigrants entered the country. In 1996, according to the existing records, an additional 20,000 Russian nationals crossed the Atlantic to become part of a new society (“U.S. Immigration,” 2002, p.24).

The post-Soviet Russian immigrants came in different statuses. While some Russians arrived as asylum-seekers, international students or professional immigrants, others relocated as spouses of U.S. citizens. Post-Soviet Russian immigrants settled throughout the country. New York City became one of the primary destinations for the newcomers. As Isurin (2011) has pointed out,

The undeniable advantages of a big cultural center, its intrinsic immigrants’ vibe, it's big Jewish presence and a large Russian community established there in the 1970s have become the major reasons for Russian immigrants to choose New York over other cities. (p. 16)

U.S. Census Bureau data indicates that a little over 364,000 Russian immigrants resided in the United States in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In 2010, the number of Russia-born immigrants reached 383, 166 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). By 2017, the population of Russian immigrants increased to 403,670 people. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a).

In general, post-Soviet Russian immigrants tend to be well educated and work in various industries and fields related to science, politics, medicine, finance, education, technology, social work, and development. As scholars have stressed, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation experienced a significant brain drain losing some of its most qualified professionals to U.S. private and public industries. The state of California alone has become a home for some of the most accomplished experts from Russia who work in the field of technology. Today, “the Russian technological community in Silicon Valley” includes around “30-50 thousand specialists” (Ryazantsev & Pismennaya, 2016, p.23).

The cohort of post-Soviet Russian immigrants whose lives are at the center of this study also represents a class of professionals with expertise in various areas. In the following sections,

I unpack the factors that motivated or forced this immigrant group to come to the United States. Focusing on immigrants' voices, I also discuss the transnational relationships that Russian immigrants maintain to their home country, clarifying why these ties are essential to their immigrant lives.

3.2 Reasons for Immigration

3.2.1 Economic Insecurities in Russia

Through my exploration of Russian immigrants' experiences, it became clear that all participants considered several factors when deciding to leave Russia for a new country. The goal to achieve economic security was one of the most significant factors that motivated all immigrants in this cohort to come to the United States. Russian immigrants did not live in poverty before emigration, yet, they were driven to pursue financial stability they lacked in their homeland.

Lada, for example, a financial support specialist in her late forties, moved to the United States in 2010. Even though she has a higher degree, Lada never felt secure in her employment in Russia and often struggled to have enough financial resources to take care of her aging parents. Coming to the United States was an opportunity to solve financial problems. Lada was not eager to leave her parents and friends behind. However, understanding that she has a responsibility to support her family, she decided to immigrate when she was offered a position in marketing in the United States. Immigration was a difficult but a necessary step in Lada's life. Here is what she said about her decision:

I was not excited about coming to America like other people. I was more scared, probably. New country, I don't know anybody. Americans think everybody wants to go and stay here, but it wasn't me. It was terrifying for me. I didn't want to leave my parents, my friends, anyone. My whole life was in Russia. Everything. But I had to come, and it was always so unstable with jobs [in Russia]. I would get a job and then lose it because the business would lose money or something else. But I had to take care of my parents. They are older people and they have health issues and expenses. Everything was so expensive. I just needed a good job, a stable job... But again, don't think it was like my dream or something like that. My goal was to support my parents.

Another informant, Lev, a graphic designer in his early forties, similarly did not have particular plans of moving to the United States. Before emigration, Lev had assumed that he

would always live only in his home country. He was brought up in a working-class Soviet family. As Lev explained, his family “did not have a lot, but my parents have always been very optimistic people.” Growing up, Lev observed his parents struggle financially, especially during the 1980s and the 1990s when the Soviet economy collapsed. Seeing his parents’ financial problems, Lev made a promise to himself that he would do everything in his power to have financial security. With this goal in mind, Lev received higher education and began working in the banking industry. In 2007 he unexpectedly lost his job. Such a turn of events made Lev realize that he needs to find better opportunities somewhere outside of Russia. Lev stated:

Even with higher education, nobody will guarantee you a stable job that will pay well in Russia. The Russian economy has been in some transition, sometimes from bad to worse for the past 20 years. And I observed how people always struggle to have a healthy lifestyle. I also had difficulties with employment. I mean, I want my income to cover basic things and also to let me have a healthy lifestyle. I wanted to help relatives, travel, and feel secure, in general... I thought, why not go to another country where the economy is more stable. America seemed like the right choice for that.

By focusing on the state of the Russian economy in the past two decades, Lev emphasized the structural context in which he and many other immigrants decided to leave their homeland. Indeed, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has continuously dealt with economic development issues. Beginning in 1992, Russia introduced economic reforms to gradually transition from a command to a market financial system. Following these reforms, Russia experienced a severe economic crisis which left a large proportion of the Russian population in acute poverty. As economic data indicates, “a record 35 percent of the population was living below the official poverty line by the end of 1995” (Klugman & Braithwaite, 1998, p.44). From 1998 to 2008, the Russian economy improved significantly due to the revenues from natural gas and crude oil exports (Akindinova, Bessonov, & Yasin, 2018). In 2008, however, the Russian economy was slowed down by the global financial crisis. Since then, Russian society has not seen any significant economic growth.

The country once again experienced a financial crisis in 2014. The drop in global oil prices and, to some extent, the sanctions that the West levied against Russia for its operations in Ukraine had a severe impact on the Russian economy (Tyll, Pernica & Arltová, 2018). The Russian ruble was weakened against foreign currencies. Moreover, the financial crisis resulted in an increase in food prices and medical costs, and the overall quality of life of Russian nationals

declined. Such persistent instabilities in the Russian economy have pushed professionals like Lada, Lev, and others to look for a stronger financial future abroad.

3.2.2 Political Reasons for Immigration

Economic insecurities were not the only reasons that forced Russian immigrants to move to the United States. Eleven participants, for instance, indicated that they decided to leave Russia due to political reasons. These immigrants expressed criticism toward their country where state officials normalized corruption and continuously violated people's civil and human rights. Although corruption is often viewed as a financial or a social problem (Lewis, 2017; Khondker, 2006), Russian immigrants assessed it as an issue that is intimately tied to authoritarianism in Russian society.

Max, a business analyst in his early thirties, made it clear that corruption in Russia was one of the factors that shaped his immigration decision. While he still lived in his hometown, he had aspirations to start his own business that would allow him to achieve his career and financial goals. However, he realized that due to corrupt tax authorities, he might never have an opportunity to build his business and to live a balanced life. Here is how Max reflected upon his immigration story:

I come from a working-class family. I had a regular life of a regular Russian person. I finished school, then studied in a university. When you grow up, you don't think that one day you will leave your country. But when you grow up, you start analyzing. You start comparing how some people live and how you live. You start comparing how people live in your country and how people live in other countries. I can tell you that I was just tired of living in Russia because to get anything done there you have to bribe. No matter what you do. If you want to open your own business, if you're going to get some help from hospitals, you are always expected to bribe. I had enough of that. All that corruption. I just needed to move to a different place.

If for Max corruption in Russia was one of the driving factors for emigration, Nick, a restaurant business assistant and a non-profit management specialist in his mid-thirties, who self-identified as a gay man, talked about the political system that forced him to move to the United States. Nick described Russian political regime as authoritarian dictatorship. In his opinion, the authoritarianism of the Russian government has been steadily increasing for the past two decades, and he was no longer willing to live under a system that fuels suppression of human

rights, and especially those of sexual minorities. As an activist for LGBTQ rights in Russia, Nick worked on projects related to HIV awareness and prevention. Because of his identity and activist work with a marginalized group, Nick felt that his life was in danger and that he needed to emigrate. Here is what Nick shared:

It is not a secret that gay people are oppressed in Russia. It happens not only by political people but Russian society in general hates gay people. Not everyone, of course. But I am speaking generally. I worked with LGBTQ people. I worked on HIV awareness and prevention. I am an activist. In Russia I worked for a non-profit organization, working with LGBTQ people. Russian authorities were curious about my work and I thought I would get in trouble there. I decided to come here. At first, I thought about going to Ukraine because I could continue my activism there too and help LGBTQ people. It was a choice between the U.S. and Ukraine, so I chose the U.S. because I thought maybe Ukraine might not be so safe.

When I came, it was tough for me. I felt free as a gay man but as an immigrant it was very difficult. My English was not so good. I had to work in a restaurant as a helper with lower pay because I didn't speak English. But gradually things became better for me.

For Lera, a professional in social development in her mid-forties, political oppression in Russia also factored into her decision to emigrate. Lera explained that the primary reason why she relocated to the United States was that she married a U.S. citizen. However, similar to Nick, she did not want to continue living in a country where people's freedom of expression was suppressed and where she could be persecuted for speaking up against state oppression. Lera has never thought of herself as a political activist, yet, she strongly believed that every human is entitled to a right to live in a politically secure and open environment. Lera insisted that the Russian political system and that authoritarianism have degraded the lives of everyday Russian citizens. Lera's comments reflected the views of other informants who left Russia for political reasons:

I came to America because I married a man from here. I worked at an international company in Russia. So, the main reason of course was my marriage. My husband would not live in Russia. I said, ok, I agree, we should move to America ... Of course, I had other reasons to come to America. I wanted a better life, better pay for work, just a better lifestyle. I wanted financial stability. Also, politics in Russia was terrible. It is still awful for people. Government, those chinovniki [officials], they steal from people. You couldn't do much and so people leave the country... I considered this fact, too, of course. It was an essential factor for me. I wanted to live in a country where chinovniki [officials] do not steal from people. I don't want

to live in a country where you will go to jail, or your family members will go to jail if you say something negative about the government.

The political issues that study informants addressed to explain their reasons for immigration have also been observed and captured by scholars and civil society organizations. International civil society has often described Russia's political regime as authoritarian for its systematic violence against journalists, activists, and opposition groups who have attempted to disclose corruption and power abuse by Russian politicians (Greene, 2014; Gel'man, 2015; Galeano & Roylance, 2018). As immigrants' accounts indicate, the state of the political regime has burdened some Russian nationals. They often saw no other option but to look for political stability and freedoms in other countries.

3.2.3 Immigration for Professional Development

A reason for immigration that was identified among all study participants was their eagerness to grow professionally and to work in an international setting. While it was not the primary reason for many respondents, it was undeniably a very significant one that all immigrants considered during their immigration decision-making process. Kera, for example, a communication specialist in the financial sector in her early forties, came to the United States for better economic opportunities and stable employment. At the same time, she was also determined to continue her career in business development to gain international experience. Kera explained that as a professional, she felt the need to continue developing her skills and to apply her expertise outside of her home country. Coming to the United States was an excellent opportunity for Kera to achieve her goals of professional growth. She stated:

I describe and see myself as a very ambitious person. People call me a careerist, but for me it is not an insult. I always want to achieve a higher level in my career and work in different parts of the world. I find it exciting ... I was quite successful in my career in Russia, but people like me always want more. I wanted an international experience and working in the U.S. in the business sphere is very prestigious.

Kera's reasons resonated with other participants who admitted that the potential to realize themselves as professionals in the global arena excited and attracted them to a new country. For example, Yura, who works as a senior specialist in information technology (IT) sector, moved to the United States in the late 1990s. As a man with a drive for life, Yura aspired to have new

experiences and a global career. Here is what Yura recounted about his motivation for immigration:

I came to the United States because I was offered an excellent job here. I had an excellent job in Russia before I arrived, but I became curious, and why not try and see if this is for me... I was curious, my career was growing, and as a specialist, I wanted to expand my options. Plus, people at my first job in America wanted my skills and expertise. I had a lot to offer. I had a lot to offer in skills and I was not afraid, wanted to learn something new.

Vadim, an international development expert in his mid-thirties, also moved to the United States in search of growth as a global professional. Vadim began thinking about the opportunity to live and work abroad while he was still a student in a secondary school. Many of his peers considered getting higher education either in Europe or the United States, and he was eager to do the same. Vadim's family and friends always encouraged him to have a strong sense of confidence and to believe in his intellectual abilities. Growing up in an encouraging environment served as a motivational imperative for Vadim to follow his educational and professional ambitions. Reflecting on his career aspirations, he said:

I work in international development, and I needed professional experience internationally. I studied in Europe before and I was not afraid to go abroad again. On the contrary, I wanted to work in the U.S. I knew it would be good for my career, and my job offered perfect pay... As a professional today, you need more experience in different places. In my field, especially. You cannot be stuck in one place only. I have a mindset. Well, in my mind, professional growth requires constant mobility. If you want to grow, you have to be mobile. If you don't go outside of your comfort zone, you become irrelevant and your skills or knowledge become irrelevant... I know immigration is a challenge, but I welcomed it, I was okay with it.

It is important to note that all Russian immigrants were employed in well-paying positions when I was conducting my fieldwork. Most worked specifically in those fields that they were trained for and in which they were genuinely interested. But these professional successes were not always easily achieved and, in some cases, resulted in emotional health issues. Some immigrants, for instance, told me that professional adjustment in the United States had caused a considerable amount of stress that was built around the issue of language proficiency. As scholars argue, language skills impact one's access to employment and social

services as well as one's ability to build social relationships in a new society. Low language proficiency, on the other hand, inhibits immigrants' integration and often leads to social isolation and distress (Kuo & Roysircar, 2004; Bleakly & Chin, 2010; Nawyn, Gjokaj, Agbényiga, & Grace 2012). Several respondents confessed that they struggled with the English language when they first started working in the United States. Mila, for example, a marketing manager in her late thirties, explained that she was often afraid to sound unintelligent among her American co-workers. This sense of insecurity caused anxiety when Mila had to express herself not only verbally but also in a written format. She commented:

There was never blatant negativity toward me when I spoke English at work. People did not laugh, nothing like that. But it was still very stressful because I felt that my English was not strong enough. The challenge was not only speaking but also writing. I found out that I could not handle specific tasks as fast as I wanted to and as efficiently as my American colleagues. One of my work duties was responding to inquiries about employment benefits, and I found myself spending a lot of time on each response email. I felt very constrained in my communication. That was truly stressful.

Mila's experiences were similar to the experiences of seven other participants. However, the issues with the English language were not the only ones that Russian immigrants had to deal with in a culturally different workplace environment. Some immigrants, for instance, shared that to establish themselves as highly skilled workers in a new society, they had to learn how to navigate an unfamiliar and extremely competitive work culture. On the one hand, this experience provided immigrants with invaluable professional skills. On the other hand, it has worsened their emotional well-being. Commenting on the culture of competitiveness, Roman, a restaurant executive director in his mid-forties explained:

Your professional background and career achievements are more valuable than things like marital status or the number of children you have. People of all backgrounds, and especially immigrants, are often judged based on where they work and what professional positions they hold. This is why highly skilled professionals are incredibly concerned with career growth and invest most of their time and effort into their professional life.

Curiously enough, despite the emotional distress that these professionals had to deal with, they were proud of their achievements and the fact that they were able to position themselves strategically and successfully in a global professional market. Moreover, as respondents asserted,

their careers have allowed immigrants to realize their professional goals and to build careers that afforded them middle-class or an upper middle-class lifestyle. All informants currently live in middle or upper-middle-class neighborhoods and have enough disposable income to participate in high levels of consumption. Sixteen immigrants in this study shared that as highly paid specialists, they earned enough to purchase their own houses or condominiums in the United States. Four immigrants plan to purchase housing within the next several years.

3.2.4 Personal Reasons for Immigration

3.2.4.1 Marrying U.S. Citizen.

It is important to note that four women in this group moved to the United States primarily because they married U.S. citizens. Discussing their experiences, these women asserted that they chose to get married not because they felt forced to follow Russian traditions, which emphasizes marriage as part of women's identities and responsibilities (Dutta, 2015), but because their goal was to self-realize as life partners. Coming to the United States to live with their husbands was a necessary step to support and to strengthen their marital union.

Academic literature typically discusses women who emigrate to foreign countries independently as representatives of the feminization of migration, while females who follow their husbands abroad are viewed as wives with a dependent immigration status (Piper, 2003; de Leon Siantz, 2013; Mahieu, Timmerman, & Heyse, 2015). Although my informants followed their husbands to the United States, as specialists in various fields they took into account their professional goals and objectives when making immigration decisions. None of these women planned to remain in the status of a dependent housewife in the United States. In fact, they were all determined to continue working and applying themselves as highly skilled professionals. Moreover, as these women pointed out, economic insecurities and political issues in their homeland also factored into their decisions to leave Russia.

Asya, a foreign language teacher in her mid-forties, shared that when she married her American husband, she decided to stay with him in the United States. However, she considered building a career in a new country because she wanted to have autonomy and to challenge a stereotype that exists about Russian women in U.S. society. As Asya emphasized, she did not

wish American nationals to assume that she married a man from the United States to take advantage of him and his financial status. She said:

I was an established professional when I came to the U.S. At that time, I worked in Moscow and I knew that I did not want to be a nanny here, and I wanted a great, fulfilling career. I started applying for more prestigious positions because I believed that U.S. employers value highly skilled workers.

Yana, a specialist in sales in non-profit sector in her early thirties, also explained that she wanted to continue building her career once she relocated to the United States. Because she had a promising career back in Russia, Yana's goal was to continue working and applying her skills in a new country:

I received a higher education in Russia. I had a good job. I worked in different places there, but I did not have my own family. I met my husband and because we both wanted to have a family, I decided to move to him to America. Also, there were some economic problems and even political issues, of course. I didn't agree with Putin's regime. We decided it would be better for me to come to America... When I came here, I did not want to stay home. I did not plan to stay at home, and I wanted to work. To make my own money and to help my husband. As I said, I had a great job in Russia, and I still wanted to be a professional.

3.2.4.2 Intercultural Curiosity

My in-depth fieldwork findings revealed that intercultural curiosity, which is "being interested and willing to learn different things and to experience unfamiliar situations" (Guo, 2019, p.291), has also motivated Russian professionals to come to the United States.

Immigration studies typically neglect discussing the role that intercultural curiosity plays in immigration decisions. In this cohort of immigrants, however, fourteen individuals stated that a desire to personally experience a different culture has also motivated them to start an immigration journey.

As immigrants' accounts highlighted, the interest to immerse in U.S. culture has been growing in their minds many years prior to their final immigration decision. In fact, it has been fueled by their study of U.S. history and society in schools and universities back in their homeland as well as by their exposure to various forms of U.S. popular culture broadcast on Russian television. Russian immigrants considered a chance to live in a different culture as a form of self-directed learning oriented toward global awareness and personal growth. Comments

provided by Dina, an assistant in the information technology (IT) business in her late thirties, reflect the feelings and the experiences of other Russian professionals. This is what she shared:

This may not sound so serious, but one of the reasons why I came was because I wanted a new cultural experience. I love learning about different cultures. I wanted to experience living differently. I watched great movies about American life. I studied some of American history. So, of course, it was fascinating for me to see America, to meet American people, to understand these people. Especially because you hear that America has many people and cultures from around the world, which attracted me too... I watched so many Hollywood movies, read books, and things like that in Russia, and I wanted to experience this country myself. America is not as famous as a country as it was before, but a lot of people want to visit. I wanted not just to visit but to live here. I would say I have a global mind. I don't close myself to new things. So yes, a new culture and new experience for sure, that attracted me.

Russian immigrants, as their accounts above illustrate, have chosen to come to the United States for economic, political, professional, and personal reasons. This is a group of people that was motivated to improve their quality of life and to achieve personal and professional goals. At the same time, as Russian immigrants continue to adapt to their realities in the United States, they also maintain numerous relations with their country of origin. These relations, as my fieldwork has revealed, have become a significant part of immigrants' daily routine.

3.3. Homeland Ties

3.3.1 Familial Connections

Transnationalism studies have shown that some of the most critical ties that immigrants tend to maintain to their countries of origin include their relationships with families (Salih, 2003; Baldassar & Merla, 2014). For all of my informants, transnational family relations are also some of the most significant ties that connect them to Russia. Using today's technology, Russian immigrants communicate with their relatives daily and actively engage in their transnational family lives.

Professionals shared that to maintain ties with their families, they also make short trips to Russia. Unlike low-income or undocumented immigrants, this cohort of professionals is not restricted financially or legally to travel internationally. However, working for companies and organizations where they only get two weeks of vacation time limits their travel opportunities.

Most participants travel to their home country only once a year. Only four informants said that they had not visited Russia since they relocated to the United States.

Because of their busy schedule and inability to visit families in Russia more frequently, some Russian immigrants invite their relatives to the United States as visitors. As Vadim, an international development expert in his mid-thirties, explained, “being so busy with work, you can’t just leave for too long. And traveling to Russia takes so much preparation and time for me. My parents started to visit me more often. It’s more convenient that way, and this is what we decided to do for now.”

Scholars of transnationalism have illustrated that cultural values and affective connectedness are often some of the primary motivators for transnational family relations (Lim, 2009). These findings resonated with my study participants. Family relations have a significant value in Russian culture. Moreover, maintaining ties to their families allows immigrants to fulfill their social responsibilities and provide transnational care as supportive children and siblings. Immigrants’ goal to have a quality lifestyle includes a desire to provide a quality lifestyle for their families in Russia as well. Akim, a man in his mid-thirties who works as a culinary assistant, has not seen his mother in over two years. However, he believes that as a son, he has an obligation to ensure his mother’s well-being. This is why Akim provides for his mother financially. Akim commented:

I live here now, but my mother is still in Russia. I support her, and I would never stop communicating with my mother. She raised me, so I feel I owe her a lot for my life. Even if I am here, I feel like I owe her my support and also I send gifts. She is my responsibility now and I am happy that I can do it.

Participants also reported that, despite the physical distance, they feel emotionally connected to their relatives who remain in Russia. As scholars have illustrated, transnational lifestyles may cultivate a sense of guilt among immigrants who cannot fully provide support to their families they left behind (Takeda, 2012). Russian immigrants also share a sense of guilt because they are unable to be physically present in their home country when their parents or siblings need their assistance. Therefore, to compensate for their absence, Russian professionals stay emotionally available to their transnational families. Lada, a financial support specialist in her late forties, noted:

I talk to my parents every day. It’s a normal part of the day. We use Skype. We discuss everything that happens to me and to them. It’s standard, this kind of

lifestyle. You are here, your parents and other family are there. So many people live like this... I keep in touch with them because they are my family. They are my roots. Just because you move away from your family doesn't mean you leave. It's like, for example, if you lived in Russia, many families live in different cities. Here, it's, of course, further away, but emotionally, it doesn't matter. It's like they are here with me, but they are there in Russia... I feel bad when I can't visit because I feel like I am betraying in some way, but I always try to support them.

Twelve participants in my study have also claimed that their transnational family relations are essential to their psychological well-being and help them deal with challenges that immigrant living brings. Russian immigrants' reflections support the claims of transnational scholars who have argued that connections to transnational families often serve as channels of emotional support for immigrant groups (Baldassar, 2007). To cope with stress, for example, Russian professionals rely on their families for reassurance, consolation, and advice that they often need. This is how Irina, a research scientist in her late forties, reflected on her experiences:

When I first came to the states it was very hard for us financially and psychologically. Let me tell you my story. I had to get an abortion here. It was a terrible experience. When I went to the hospital, the doctor asked me if I wanted abortion with anesthesia or not because if I want it with anesthesia I have to pay \$50 dollars. Yes, five and zero. I looked at my husband but we didn't have any money so he said, no honey, we cannot pay. Can you imagine what I went through? It was so emotionally tough for me. Of course, my family supported me. I needed their support. I know if my parents need to share if something is bothering or worrying them, and I also share when I am struggling with something. We are like therapy for each other. It's kind of a paradox. On the one hand, you want independence but, on the other hand, you need close people. But it's normal for our culture. You know Russian don't go to a therapist; they go to their parents. Life is very stressful and something happens every day. I am working on myself to be less reactive to things, but it's not so easy, especially when you live in a different country. Thankfully, my parents always listen to me and try to support me.

3.3.2 Friendships in Russia

Maintaining ties with friends back in Russia is another way Russian immigrants stay connected to their homeland. Friends in Russian society are often viewed and valued as family members. The value of friendship in Russian culture, according to scholars, has been shaped by economic, political, and social hardships that Russian society has experienced during Soviet times (Wierzbicka, 1997). Russian people struggled immensely living under the repressive

Soviet system which controlled every activity and every aspect of life of the Soviet citizen and imprisoned any individual who dared to speak against the state abuse of power.

Such a political environment made it crucial for Soviet nationals to build emotionally deep friendships with people in whom they could confide their life struggles. Although Russian society no longer lives under the oppressive Soviet regime, Russian nationals continue to view friendships as central to their daily relations. And as Isurin (2011) clarifies, “the word friend is never overused by Russians and usually is reserved for a few very close people that the person carries throughout his life with much care and appreciation” (p.104).

As this immigrant cohort explained, their friends in Russia are significant to them and their well-being. The exchange of information, made possible through transnational communication, allows immigrants to revisit their past, discuss their present, and share their future with their transnational friends. Russian immigrants shared that they invest great efforts in maintaining their cross-border bonds to meet their social obligations as loyal and trustworthy friends. Emma, a senior expert in the information technology (IT) sector in her late forties, reflected:

I have friends there [Russia]. Wonderful people. We communicate very often. I love talking to my friends because I have so much in common. We talk about childhood, for example. I share my daily matters, and they tell me what’s going on in their lives. We ask each other for advice...In Russian culture, you stay loyal to your friends. You don’t change them easily. You don’t stop communicating with them even if they move. It’s funny that Russians are not considered to be warm people, but we value friendship so much, and we would do anything for our friends. I am also fortunate with friends.

Interestingly enough, some Russian immigrants stressed that they appreciate their bonds with friends from the home country more today than before immigration. In part, this is because they have not built strong friendships with U.S. nationals in their new communities. Coming to the United States, study participants had hoped that they would become friends with U.S. born residents to feel more welcomed and included as newcomers. Scholars have also shown that friendships “bring more social trust, less stress, better health, and more social support” (van der Horst & Coffé, 2012, p. 526). Moreover, scholars have demonstrated that establishing friendships with native-born residents helps immigrants to feel more valued and accepted in a new culture (Garcia, 2016; Abdelhady, 2011). However, fifteen informants in my study

confessed that they do not have a single U.S. national that they would be comfortable calling a friend today. Feliks, a financial coordinator in his late forties, observed:

I know a lot of Americans, professionally I meet a lot of people, so there is a big social network. I go to the gym, so I know some people from there, from work. I mean, Americans are good at building respectful relationships, but I would not call them real friendships. It just does not work out with Americans. I feel like, in a sense, that I don't know how to approach them. It's more comfortable with other immigrants. It's easier to connect to Hispanics, Africans, but not so much with Americans who were born here, I'd say. I have also met some Russians [immigrants] here, so we get along. I definitely connect better with other immigrants. With Americans, there is too much, maybe, probably distance. And also they live in groups. Black people have their own group. Asians hang out with Asians. White people mostly with other whites. It's strange now that I am thinking about it.

The comments that Feliks shared resonated with the views of other informants. To rationalize their lack of success with friendship-building in the United States, some questioned their behavior and ability to fit in the U.S. cultural context. Others, on the other hand, discussed their subjective cultural realization that U.S. society, unlike Russian culture, places a lesser value on the idea of friendship. Irina, a research scientist in her late forties, emphasized:

It's been my experience and just my observations that Americans don't typically have such strong bonds and such like Russians...Because they can't afford to have friendships. I mean, they have to work so much because everything in their life depends if they have a job or not. For instance, they take credit to buy a car, a house, healthcare insurance, and other needs. Many people don't own anything, and if they lose a job, they lose healthcare, so it's crazy. They have to work like crazy, and most don't have time for friends or the kind of friendships that Russians have.

At the same time, respondents admitted that their transnational friendships made a lack of friends in a new society less stressful. Cross-border bonds help some Russian immigrants deal with loneliness and isolation they sometimes feel living in the United States. These social relations also raise immigrants' self-confidence as they feel appreciated by their closest friends in Russia. This is what Zahar, a software engineer in his late thirties, underlined about his transnational friends:

Besides family, I communicate with my friends from Russia...Not every day, but very often. Sometimes there is just too much work, and my friends are busy people also... I had these friends for more than twenty years, and I can't just erase them from my life because I live in America.... My friends help me with everything. You are an immigrant every day. Even after so many years, you are still an immigrant.

I can say that my friends from Russia still understand me better than most people here [in the United States]. They accept me.

3.3.3 Civic Ties

Besides familial bonds and other interpersonal relationships that immigrants maintain to Russia, they also stay civically engaged with their country of origin. As I have indicated previously, civic engagement includes those practices that allow individuals to educate themselves and to participate in solution development for numerous economic, social, and political issues that impact their societies (McCartney, 2013). Civic engagement is expressed through activities which may range from using resources of various kinds to learn about the latest processes that affect one's country to participating in political protests and attempting to impact public policies.

Russian immigrants stay civically engaged with Russia by consistently following political, economic, and socio-cultural events which take in their sending nation. They do so by using Russian media that is readily available on the Internet. Professionals watch and read the news about Russia. As some of my informants told me, what they learn about their home country becomes the basis of many conversations they hold with their social circles both in Russia and the United States.

These practices are, of course, not unique to Russian transnational immigrants. As scholars have illustrated, Chinese immigrants in Australia and Haitians in the United States not only engage in the political and social life of their new country but also regularly follow the events that take place in their communities of origin (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 2001; Sinclair et al., 2001). Similarly, my study informants participate in the political and social events that unfold in the United States. During informal discussions, for example, Russian immigrants and I often engaged in conversations about the social issues that impact their neighborhoods and larger communities as well as reflected on social problems such as medical care, gun control, immigration, and crime that impact the larger U.S. society. At the same time, staying informed on different social and political changes in Russia is an integral part of their transnational immigrant lives.

Russian immigrants' transnational civic engagement is rooted in their civic socialization- "a process through which individuals learn how to be a citizen of a particular nation-state"

(Martinez & Cumsille, 2018, p.361). More specifically, immigrants' families, Russian educational institutions, and mass media have taught this group of professionals that as Russian citizens they have to participate in all areas of Russia's development. Civic engagement practices that immigrants have obtained and adhered to in Russia successfully relocated with them to the United States. Here is, for example, what Inna, a physical therapist in her early fifties said:

I always watch or read the news about Russia. I watch Russian news here... Usually, online, I would say. It is so easy today. You can get any (TV) channel. All newspapers are online... You learn from childhood that you must know what happens in your country. When I was in Russia, we watched evening news as a family and discussed everything together. It's like my habit. And I am concerned about Russia. Every day I read something about politics there and economy. What the government is doing. Taxes, pensions, healthcare.

Denis, a financial investment professional in his late thirties, also commented:

I always pay attention to what's happening in Russia. I can't say I enjoy reading the news because the news in Russia and here [in the United States] is about brainwashing people, but there is no way around it. I don't understand it when people say they are outside of politics or economics or some other social issues like they don't impact them. I've always been interested in understanding what's happening in world events and news, from innovations to political problems. Especially with today's far-reaching technologies or social media, you can't be uninformed...I'd say you learn it from school. My education has encouraged me to be more proactive in learning, and I think that's how it's going to be for the rest of my life.

Two study participants, Nick, a restaurant business assistant and a non-profit management specialist in his mid-thirties, and Akim, a culinary assistant in his mid-thirties, explained that their civic engagement with Russia is significant to them because they were born and raised in Russian society and because they belong to a Russian LGBTQ community. They follow what happens to an LGBTQ community in their homeland on a daily basis. They often provide their expertise to Russian LGBTQ organizations to advance civic and human rights of sexual and other minorities in Russian society. This is what Nick shared:

I work with LGBTQ in Russia, and it's about consulting. They ask me for advice. I give them ideas about what I think is more critical in priority. For example, there will be a conference about LGBTQ in the workplace, and the organizer asked me if I can help. I mean, I know everyone who is in charge, and I can give them advice on how to organize it and how to conduct such discussions and discuss topics... This is important to me as a gay man but also because I am not indifferent about these people. I want Russian society to change, and I want LGBTQ to be accepted.

I don't know when that will happen but I am trying to contribute and provide my help.

When conducting my fieldwork, I also found out that eighteen immigrants participate in various social and political discussions on social media where they frequently share their views or gain other people's perspectives on various developments that impact both U.S. and Russian societies. Scholars refer to such practices as digital participation (Dezuanni, Foth, Mallan, & Hughes, 2017) to which individuals resort, seeking to foster social change. Informants explained that digital participation not only allows them to learn about U.S. society more in-depth and also to continue to understand the larger national consciousness of the Russian people. Digital media puts immigrants in contact with Russian and U.S. nationals outside of their social and professional circles, serving as a tool that enables them to engage in cross-border public discussions circulating in both nations. Akim commented:

I read all the time about what happens in Russia and what happens in America. All of it is important to me. I am also active on social media, in those groups with Russian immigrants or just people in Russia. I leave comments, and I discuss issues that matter to me. If I see someone say hateful things about gay people, for instance, I always respond, and I debate and I also teach about some issues...For instance, people in Russia discuss political issues on social media more often now. I like that because I can still see how people there think about Russian government. And I can see the same in America. I understand people in two societies at once...I am concerned about human rights, LGBTQ rights. I share my opinion and learn other people's opinions. I don't want to be indifferent, especially on human rights. I think politically people need to be active, find safe ways to be productive.

Discussing transnationalism with my study informants, I also asked if their homeland ties have ever compelled them to return to Russia permanently. None of them stated that they were ready to abandon their lives in the U.S completely and to relocate back to their homeland. Immigrants explained that if they had no financial or time restrictions, they would visit Russia more often. They also said that they would more actively engage in solving development issues in Russian society. However, these immigrants have become accustomed to living transnationally, which allows them to realize their professional and personal goals and to serve as links that tie their home and host nations.

3.4 Conclusion

For over three centuries, the mobility of Russian people to the United States connected the fates of Russian and US societies. History shows that in previous centuries, Russian emigrants left imperial or Soviet Russia trying to escape political and economic hardships in their homeland. Immigrants from post-Soviet Russia, whose experiences inform this study, also came to the United States with particular goals. Some left Russia in search of better economic opportunities and political freedoms in the United States, and others also desired to improve their professional careers and personal lives.

But the desire for life changes does not mean that immigrants abandon their country of origin entirely. As immigrants adapt to the United States, their daily routine also includes continuous contacts with the homeland. For instance, Russian immigrants remain connected to their immediate and extended families in Russia. They also maintain transnational friendships that they had built before they immigrated to the United States. Staying informed on the latest political, economic, and social developments in Russia is also a part of Russian immigrants' daily transnationalism.

The stories of Russian professionals made it clear that they embrace their transnational living and do not intend to leave Russia or the United States behind. Transnationalism is now a norm for this immigrant group who believe that human life can be lived in multiple places simultaneously. Russian immigrants are not indifferent toward Russian society. They plan to stay involved with their country of origin further, even though the majority of their time they physically spend in the United States.

Because Russian immigrants regularly engage with their home country, they have also been affected by the most recent deterioration of U.S.-Russia ties. Immigrants have confessed that the tensions which have emerged in US-Russia relations have allowed them to gain a more in-depth insight into their own identities and roles as individuals who straddle two complicated worlds. In the following chapter, I look specifically at how U.S.-Russia relations have impacted Russian immigrants' living, focusing specifically on their complex identities that continue to be shaped by a life in a transnational zone.

CHAPTER 4. U.S.-RUSSIA TENSIONS -A BARRIER TO RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS' TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

Dina, an assistant in the information technology (IT) business in her late thirties:

I am very disappointed with what's happening between Russia and America. It's kind of crazy. It's politics, and it doesn't benefit anyone. And you feel like you didn't do anything, but it is a part of our life now. And you have to think whose fault it is and whose side you should be on. And then people always ask you about it, here [in the United States] and in Russia. Everybody wants to know your opinion, but nobody wants to understand real problems. They just want to see whose side you are on and if they can trust you because, like, you are connected to Russia and America. And so, people in Russia want to know, are you on America's side, are you with us, can we trust you, and here, people want to know, are you on Russia's side, can we trust you? It's like Americans want to check if you are loyal to America because you live here now. In Russia, it's like they want to check if you are loyal to Russia. And then it's like now my responsibility to fix these issues somehow.

Dina's account provides an insight into her life between Russia and the United States. Clearly, she is not indifferent toward the current hostilities in U.S.-Russia political relations. On the contrary, Dina is concerned with the course of international relations between her countries of origin and destination.

Like Dina, all other participants in this study expressed their disappointment with the state of U.S.-Russia relations since 2014. As I have already discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the first event that has led to strong tensions between the two nation-states was Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, a former Ukrainian territory, in 2014. Another political development that has severely damaged the trust between the two countries is the alleged Russian meddling in the U.S. presidential election in 2016.

In this chapter, I focus on how U.S.-Russia political tensions impact Russian immigrants' transnational living. I show that as a heterogeneous group, Russian immigrants construct and express diverse political positions toward the deterioration of U.S.-Russia ties. Most importantly, centering immigrants' accounts, I argue that U.S.-Russia political adversaries emerge as disruptive forces that hinder immigrants from developing a transnational identity; that is a sense of simultaneous belonging to Russia and the United States.

In this chapter, I illustrate that some Russian immigrants condemn Russia's global political behavior and support U.S. sanctions against their home country. The stories of these immigrants reveal that their criticisms of Russia have been confronted with hostile attitudes from their transnational families and friends in their native land. Critical stances toward Russia's global actions and antagonistic encounters with family and friends have fostered a sense of detachment from Russian society among these immigrants while also strengthening identification with the United States. Other immigrants, as my study illustrates, believe that the U.S. government behaves in a belligerent manner toward Russia, seeking to weaken the Russian nation's economy, politics, and culture. Immigrants with these opinions claim to have developed a stronger sense of belonging to Russia as a result of political tensions between the two nations. As these immigrants' stories show, they feel excluded in U.S. society where they have experienced hostile reactions toward their national origin and political views. At the same time, there are also those Russian immigrants who question and condemn the global behaviors of both nation-states. Facing antagonisms toward their political stances in both countries, these participants view themselves as political outsiders in Russia and the United States. And while these immigrants continue to live between Russian and U.S. societies, they recognize and deal with a complicated feeling of non- belonging to both nations.

Working with immigrants' stories, I have found broader scholarly discussions around the concept of *identity* beneficial for my study. Therefore, in what follows, I first present academic efforts on *identity*, *transnational identity*, and *belonging* that guided my analysis of Russian immigrants' experiences. I then discuss Russian immigrants' accounts. Centering immigrants' voices, my goal here is to bring to light the challenges around identity and belonging that Russian immigrants face navigating a transnational environment between Russia and the United States.

4.1 Transnational Identity

The concept of *identity* is one of the major focuses of academic research across various disciplines. This is not surprising, considering that identity, "a sense of who one is" (Howard, 2000, p.367), plays a vital role in how people see themselves in relation to others (Hall, 1997). Identity is central to our well-being as it shapes how we treat ourselves and how others treat us (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). People can develop and embrace multiple identities throughout

their lives. Identity becomes especially significant when individuals question who they are and where they belong (Bauman, 1996). An understanding of our identities impacts our perceptions of our daily realities and the larger world. As a social construct, identity is something that we continuously learn (Hall & Maharaj, 2001). To capture the complexity of identity, Stuart Hall (1996) has argued:

Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (p. 4).

In recent years, there has also been a growing interest in the concept of transnational identity among immigration researchers who focus on immigrants' self-understandings. Researchers recognize that as more and more people build their lives across multiple nations, their daily cultural routines impact the processes and the types of identity formations (Vertovec, 2001). Scholars use the concept of transnational identity to refer to a particular "type of 'national identity' linked to at least two national referents: the society of origin and the host society" (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015). National identity is defined as a "collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation" (Guibernau, 2007, p.11). It "consists of the stories that people tell about themselves: where they came from, what they celebrate, their shared historical memories, and their expectations about what it takes to become a genuine member of the community" (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 8). What the concept of transnational identity reflects is a particular form of self-understanding and imagination. It shows that immigrants can be committed ideologically and emotionally to more than one nation-state. Building a transnational life between the two nations, immigrants can also identify themselves as individuals with a sense of dual belonging, -a sense of emotional attachment (Yuval-Davis, 2006) or "feeling 'at home'" (Amit & Bar-Lev; 2015, p.948) both to their countries of origin and destination.

Numerous studies have previously illustrated how individuals develop a sense of belonging to only one nation, usually an individual's country of birth (see, e.g., Schamiloglu, 1990; Mkrtchyan, 2015). Most of these studies draw on theorists such as Anthony D. Smith, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm, who illustrate that national identity is a socially constructed phenomenon. Anthony D. Smith (1991), for example, has argued that national

identity has an ethnic basis and includes features such as common association with “historic territory or homeland, ...historical memories... mass public culture... legal rights and duties for all members” (p. 14). Benedict Anderson (1983) has claimed that what produced a sense of national identity in the late nineteenth century is print capitalism, the distribution of published texts. The expansion of print media, as well as the spread of education, according to Anderson, served as technologies that shaped national consciousness and enabled individuals to imagine themselves as a part of one national community. Eric Hobsbawm (1983), in his turn, has insisted that the dominant political elite in nineteenth-century Europe invented traditions that were then identified and presented as ancient practices. Traditions were used to create a sense of national belonging among ordinary people and to legitimize the elite’s authority and power.

The main goal of the national identity theories is to explain how individuals form a sense of belonging to their origin nation. As a layered identity, transnational identity requires a different approach. Specifically, it becomes necessary to examine what factors help or hinder immigrants from developing a sense of belonging to a new society as well as what factors allow or prevent immigrants from maintaining a sense of belonging to their native land.

Immigration studies have illustrated that there is never a single factor that facilitates the development of belonging to a host country. However, inclusive state policies that promote immigrants’ integration in a new national community are extremely beneficial to creating a context for immigrants to feel included in a destination site. Moreover, welcoming and accepting attitudes from the natives are equally crucial for immigrants to form a sense of belonging to an adoptive country (de Graaw & Bloemraad, 2017; OECD/European Union, 2015; Fussell, 2014; Abdelhady; 2011; Faucher, 2010; Lucassen, 2005; Schuck & Münz, 2001). As Flyoa Anthias (2006) has argued, acceptance plays a significant role in the formation of a sense of belonging, and it is “through practices and experiences of social inclusion that a sense of a stake and acceptance in society is created and maintained” (p.21). The lack or absence of the factors mentioned above can work against immigrants’ inclusion in a new country. Racism, xenophobia, and other hostile attitudes from the host society hinder immigrants from developing a sense of oneness with the receiving nation (Miles, 2004). Lacking acceptance, immigrants feel excluded from the national fabric of the adoptive state and often self-isolate or leave the host country entirely to avoid prejudicial treatment that diminishes their well-being.

At the same time, scholars point out that experiences with everyday racial or ethnic discrimination in a new society may serve as factors that strengthen immigrants' sense of belonging to their home country (Fujita, 2009). Immigrants grow even more emotionally attached to their nation of origin, where they do not face animosity as national outsiders. Consequently, it is this sense of emotional connection to the homeland that often motivates immigrants to contribute to the political, economic, and social development of their communities of origin even when maintaining transnational links is difficult and costly (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 2001).

Other scholars, however, have illustrated that inclusive state programs and accepting public attitudes in a home country are equally important for immigrants to maintain a sense of national belonging to their homeland. National affinity may diminish among immigrants in those cases when home governments initiate immigration policies that create obstacles for immigrant groups to maintain ties to their countries of origin. Moreover, immigrants may abandon their attachment to their home society if it treats and labels immigrant individuals as traitors for relocating to another state (Berg, 2009).

What academic scholarship points to is that accepting social contexts in a new country and a nation of origin are significant for immigrants to have a simultaneous sense of belonging to host and home countries. Otherwise, immigrants may have affinity only with one nation where they feel most appreciated. In some instances, immigrants may, in fact, realize that they belong neither in their adoptive country nor in their home society. Such immigrants are neither fully integrated nor fully transnational (Roberts, 2013).

Indeed, identity is a complex aspect of human life and is affected by numerous factors. The stories of Russian immigrants that I present further reveal that international relations can also play a significant role in shaping immigrants' sense of self and belonging. Reflecting on their daily realities as transnational subjects, Russian immigrants admit that they wish to have a sense of belonging to and inclusion in both nations. However, U.S.-Russia geopolitical tensions today create an environment that restrains them from asserting simultaneous emotional attachment to both countries. The following narratives reveal how U.S.-Russia political ties worm into Russian immigrants' lives and become a barrier to the development of the transnational identity.

4.2 The Impact of U.S.-Russia Tensions on Russian Immigrants' Identities: "We Can't Belong to Russia and America at the Same Time."

4.2.1 Non-belonging in Russia

Russian immigrants closely follow political relations between Russia and the United States. They receive most information about U.S.-Russia ties from Russian and U.S. media. Although Russian professionals are critical of Russian and U.S. media outlets and how they cover U.S.-Russia relations, it is this access to transnational television and online newspapers that allows immigrants to be aware of the political developments in both nations.

As I have mentioned earlier, Russian immigrants hold diverse positions on the political ties between their countries of origin and destination. At the same time, all believe that today's tensions between Russia and the United States are now an important factor in how they are perceived either in Russia or the United States or both countries simultaneously.

Five immigrants, for example, openly disapproved of Russia's actions in the Ukrainian crisis and were convinced that the Russian government meddled in the U.S. presidential election in 2016. They criticized Russia's violation of the Ukraine's territorial integrity and attempts to create instability in U.S. political culture. Akim, a culinary assistant in his mid-thirties, for example, explained his perspective on the U.S.-Russia relations this way:

I fully support America in what is going on. Russia didn't have to annex Crimea, and I am sure they interfered in [the 2016] election. I don't know why create such a mess. It's against the law. There are international rules and regulations, and Russia can't just do whatever it wants to do.

This sentiment was corroborated by Inna, a physical therapist in her early fifties, who shared her stance on U.S.-Russia relations:

I understand that there are many Russians in Crimea, it's mostly Russian culture, but there are laws. Imagine that any country today can just take over the territory of another country. The whole world would collapse. Ukraine is a separate nation. Why does Russia get involved? I am wholeheartedly against it...Yes, I think that Russia interfered in the election. I am not sure how they did it, all the details, but I believe they did. I don't want Russian people to suffer, but Russia has to be responsible for what it did.

These five immigrants explained that the divide in U.S.-Russia relations had created a social context in which they experienced hostility from their families and friends in Russia

because of their political views. Critical of Russia's global political stances and troubled by encountered hostilities, these Russian immigrants narrated feelings of detachment from their home society. This is well reflected in the accounts that Nick, a restaurant business assistant and a non-profit management specialist in his mid-thirties, shared with me during my time in the field.

When Nick and I met to discuss his views on U.S.-Russia tensions, it became instantly clear that he was extremely interested in human rights issues and international politics. Nick was very open about his political opinions that Russia should have never interfered in the Ukrainian territory and annexed Crimea. "What Russia did is against every international rule," Nick stated several times during the interview. Moreover, he was confident that the Russian government interfered in the U.S. presidential election in 2016 and supported U.S. sanctions against his home country.

As Nick explained, U.S.-Russia relations is the topic that he often discusses with his colleagues in Russia and the United States. "You can't escape these conversations about what happened. It is all over media," Nick stressed. He regularly posts different news about Russian and U.S. politics on social media in hopes of informing people in both countries about the current developments in the political environment between Russia and the United States. Reading about and discussing international politics is a part of Nick's daily routine.

U.S.-Russia tensions have impacted how Nick looks at his home country. He was especially discontent with the fact that Russian society supported Crimea's annexation:

Russian people readily accepted Russian state propaganda that set Russia against Ukraine and the United States. How many people protested? It seems like you [society] deserved this whole shit, sanctions. I understand it's not their [society's] fault, but still, they deserve it. If you think it's ok what Russia has done, then ok, you have what you have. If you are ok with what you see, if you are ok with propaganda. You have what you have. Why are they [Russian society] supporting the Russian government in what it's doing? Because they believe they are part of something big that will protect them. They don't see a different perspective. They see it [the annexation of Crimea] as an operation. It was so efficient how Russia entered that territory. It was like wow, nobody expected that. It included ships, everything. No one understood anything. Ok, it happened. When you see something like that, it is a fantastic feeling, and you feel a part of it.

The conversation with Nick also revealed that U.S.-Russia tensions have had a profound impact on his relationship with his father who remains in Russia. Nick's father does not share

Nick's political position on Russia's actions in Crimea and U.S.-Russia relations. Strong political disagreements between Nick and his father have led to a complete loss of their familial relationship. Here is what Nick shared:

I did not experience discrimination in America because I am Russian. Nobody said anything to me. But I have my story. I keep in touch with my family. I write to my mom. She is worried about me. My mother is fine. We are communicating. She is telling me her news, and I tell her my news... With my sibling, we use WhatsApp. We exchange pictures. I see the photos of the child [sibling's child]. But it's different from my father. When this whole thing happened between Russia and Ukraine, my father supported Russia. And he knows I don't support it. He knows I supported U.S. sanctions. And then my father told me, and he said to me: "Look for what price you sold your county [Russia]." I think I began to think more about who I am and how people look at me in Russia. So, I am not a patriot, really and I am kind of, not really a Russian, like it's not my nation. I mean, this is how propaganda works. Before, it was not like that. We spoke before. It was not so often, but we talked. Now, we don't talk at all. He thinks I sold my homeland... It has been more than two years. My father said to me that I sold my country for 30 silver coins. He thinks I am not a loyal Russian. It is all because of these political issues.

As scholars argue, communication plays a significant role in identity formation (Hecht & Choi, 2012). "Even in a given conversation, some of our identities fade into the background, but then someone might say something or do something that makes us think about a particular identity" (Baldwin, Coleman, Gonzalez, & Suchitra, 2014, p.96). Nick's account reflects this argument. As Nick explained, after his father accused Nick of disloyalty to his homeland, he began to think of his national identity with more depth, realizing that his political views position him outside of the Russian national community. Nick pointed out that he lives with "a strange sense of who I am." "Yes, I am Russian. I spent over 30 years in Russia, but after what happened and what I saw, I sometimes don't even think I am a part or can be a part of a [Russian] society like that," Nick stated to stress his weakening sense of belonging to today's Russia. Nick confessed that despite losing his emotional attachment to his homeland today, he is hopeful that someday he would be proud to identify with Russia again. "Never say never and things can change, right?! And, yes, maybe someday I will be proud to say that I am Russian. But not today."

Similar to Nick, Lera, a professional in social development in her mid-forties, disapproved of the Russian government's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis, claiming that Russia resorted to unnecessary violence in Ukraine. Lera insisted that the current Russian state regime had

dishonored Ukrainian sovereignty and independence. “I did not support what Russia did with Crimea,” she repeated to highlight her opposition to the Russian government’s actions on the Crimean territory. Moreover, just like Nick, Lera was convinced that the Russian government interfered in the U.S. presidential election. “I don’t have any doubts about it. My husband explained it to me. I understand that Putin liked Trump more, so he wanted him to win. I think they got what he wanted,” Lera insisted.

Although Lera does not view herself as a “very political person,” she consistently follows the news about Russia and the United States and the relationships between these two countries. She also draws political information from social media, which she uses to understand what opinions people share about U.S.-Russia deteriorating ties. Lera was eager to share her perspectives on the ways in which the tensions between the two nations have altered the dynamic of her relationships with some family members and friends in her home country and contributed to her sense of distance from Russian society. In Lera’s own words:

I honestly don’t even know where to start. My parents are highly educated people. But also, they became victims of propaganda. When the whole thing started with Ukraine, and then Russia, America got involved. It was something that we talked about with my parents. Initially, my mother and my father had the opposite view. They didn’t agree with me. My mother then later changed her opinion. But there is something that I will never forget. When I asked my father, I can’t even remember what exactly I asked my father. I didn’t want to press on my political views, and I just wanted to ask him to think more critically about it [the Ukrainian crisis]. Why does he support that Russia annexed Crimea? And I said I don’t agree with it. And then, he asked, he was so angry: “Are you a fascist? Are you all fascists there?” I could not believe what I was hearing. He is comparing me to a fascist like I am attacking the whole country [Russia]. I even lost my friendship with my best friend [from Russia]. Once, we had a conversation about what is happening between Russia and America. And she says that America is terrible to Russia. Of course, I didn’t agree with her. She got so upset with me. I said to her, please, I value our friendship and I even said at the end, “I still love you” in English. And she said to me with such a tone, “Now say that in Russian.” It hurt me.

Reflecting on her experiences, Lera pointed to her realization that “friends [in Russia] probably see me as an American who is pro-America.” She claimed that she had not experienced any animosity from her social circle or a larger U.S. society because of her Russian background. This was another reason why she felt offended by the reactions of her family and friends toward her political views. “Americans never said a single bad word that I am Russian. But in Russia, people. I felt terrible. I tell you these stories because it’s like a movie, but you won’t see it on

TV,” Lera stated to stress that ordinary people’s experiences with international clashes remain mostly invisible to the global public.

To capture the intricacy of identity, Floya Anthias (2018) claimed that a sense of sharing common values is one of the critical aspects in the formation of a sense of belonging. However, common values are not necessarily “a prerequisite to belonging” (p. 144). For Lera, sharing values with the larger society is, in fact, significant to feel that she belongs to a national community. However, her experiences with antagonisms from her family and friends in Russia and her observations of Russia’s politics in the global arena led Lera to realize that she does not share the values of the Russian government and Russian society in relation to international politics. Asserting her refusal to accept Russia’s position in global politics, Lera narrated a sense of growing distance from her nation of origin and its political culture:

My thoughts, my feelings about Russia have changed a lot after what happened. I understand I have a different view of the world and what’s essential for me. I think countries should seek peace, diplomacy and not behave how Russia did. When I see that so many Russians defend what Russia did in Ukraine or laugh about election in America, I understand I don’t have much in common between us only that we call ourselves Russian... It’s hard for me to say that Russia is my country. I think sadly it’s not the kind of country that I can call my country.

Curiously enough, the five immigrants who criticized Russia’s involvement in the Ukrainian crisis and in the U.S. presidential election in 2016 maintained that they have not come across any prejudice in U.S. society as Russian immigrants in the current political context. In fact, U.S.-Russia tensions have helped these professionals understand that they are becoming more appreciative of and emotionally attached to U.S. culture and more readily accept their identities as new members of U.S. society. Nick, for instance, for instance, stated:

Yes, I can confidently say I feel more connected to America. I feel like I belong here and not so much in Russia. This is for sure. I would say that I am on America's side and kind of what happened between the two countries helped me understand it better. I am Russian, but I don’t want to be associated with Putin’s Russia. I don’t have the same mentality, especially in politics, and especially in international politics.

Lera’s statement echoed Nick’s sentiments concerning his growing attachment to the United States. Lera said:

Today I definitely feel like America is my only home. I feel more American. I am safe here and I know that even if I have different political views, I will be fine here. You can speak up freely. In Russia you couldn't do that before and especially now. Putin's Russia and especially how they treat America today, no, I don't want to be a part of that stuff.

Despite feeling a growing detachment from Russia, Lera and other four immigrants clarified that they would like to share a sense of belonging to both countries. They were all concerned that U.S.-Russia relations have impacted migration policies between the two countries, limiting the opportunities of Russian nationals to visit the United States. Indeed, because of the tensions in U.S.-Russia ties, the U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg, Russia got closed, which has significantly increased the waiting time for Russian citizens to schedule a visa appointment. If previously a typical wait time for a visa appointment constituted around two weeks, today Russian nationals can expect to wait up to 250 days before they can get a chance to go through a visa interview (Ferris-Rotman, 2018). These five immigrants argued that if U.S.-Russia relations do not begin to improve, the door of cultural exchange between the ordinary Russian and U.S. nationals will soon close, creating stronger antagonisms between the two nations. Lera, for instance, said:

No matter how I feel about Russia, if things improve and I can call Russia and America my places, my home. I mean, of course, that will be ideal and I still think that Russians should come here, and Americans should visit Russia or we will isolate. And who is going to win then? Nobody, absolutely nobody.

4.2.2 Non-belonging in the United States

As I have mentioned previously, while some Russian immigrants openly criticized Russia's international choices, others were convinced that the United States seeks to diminish Russia's political force globally. More specifically, six immigrants believed that the United States sees Russia as a global competitor whose economy, politics, and culture have to be weakened. Yura, who works as a senior specialist in the information technology (IT) sector, for instance, explained his point of view this way:

I am not really sure why America decided to get involved in Ukraine but when they tell me because they wanted to help Ukraine, I just laugh at that. They don't want Russia to be strong, it's obvious and now come up with this idea that Russia hacked election. I haven't really seen any proves. I think Russia is like a scapegoat now. American media is clear propaganda. You can blame anything you want on Russia

today. America has its political issues, like such a divide in politics here but they want to blame Russia.

Yura's statements were echoed in a conversation I had with Emma, a senior expert in the information technology (IT) sector in her late forties. She similarly argued that the United States political system experiences a crisis of political identity and loses global power. In such circumstances, the U.S. government scapegoats Russia for political problems facing the country. She said:

Turn on any American channel or read any newspaper today and you will see how America blames Russia for everything that happens. They have political problems with each other here, I mean the parties and so let's blame Russia that Hillary Clinton lost. She lost because the system is strange. Didn't she get the most votes? Think about it....Also, with Ukraine. I mean American government can't get over the fact that they are not the strongest anymore and not the leaders of the world. They want to stop Russia from any influence. Imagine if tomorrow Mexico decided to create and join some economic union with Russia and not America. And what if Russia brought its weapons to Mexican border. Imagine that. If that happened. Americans would be furious, but it's ok to do that to Russia, isn't it?

These immigrants also explained that the tensions between Russia and the United States had complicated their immigrant lives, forcing them to realize that they do not belong in U.S. society. Specifically, these immigrants marked their experiences with anti-Russian sentiments in the United States, which they interpreted as a product of the conflict between the two nations. Their political views and encounters with hostility in the United States strengthened these immigrants' understanding that although they live transnationally, they share a sense of belonging only to their home country.

Kera, a communication specialist in the financial sector in her early forties, who described herself as a "woman who is attuned to international affairs," explained that her interest in international politics facilitated her curiosity not only in the present state of U.S.-Russia relations but also in their history. Commenting on the current developments in U.S.-Russia ties, Kera spoke out in defense of the Russian government and was more critical of what she called "America's dismissive attitude toward Russia for years." In Kera's opinion, the U.S. government has historically and continues to consider Russia an "inferior nation." Kera said:

Historically Americans saw Russia as their enemy, and after the Soviet Union dissolved, I think it was even worse. In the 1990s, I feel like America was just

laughing at Russia because the country was economically destroyed, and then for them, Russia was this poor and weak country. I feel like American politicians don't understand that Russia and the Russian people have changed. I would say that Russians are much more global people. In America, you see the majority doesn't even know their history and what happens in other nations. I think it's funny why America believes that Russia can be treated as a second class.

At the relevant point in our conversation, Kera stated that she "kind of learned something more about America with new problems [U.S.-Russia political relations]." Her statement intrigued me, and I asked her to elaborate on her response. Kera continued:

Now, from people inside of America, I really understand now how they are not really friendly to Russia. And they only want to think that they are right, and their government is right. They don't believe that Russia or any other country has interests. They only care about what America wants. And they don't think why so many people in Crimea voted to be with Russia. For the majority here Russia is aggressive, Russian people are aggressive. America is good, but Russia is aggressive. Honestly, I am glad that Russia does not let anyone play with the country. If someone decides to put the country in economic danger, Russians can fight back. America just wants other countries to listen, but it does not want to listen to other countries.

Besides addressing how the foreign affairs shaped her views on U.S. and Russian societies, Kera also articulated what international political tensions revealed about her social circle in the United States and their perceptions of Kera.

Some Americans with who, I can't call them friends, but who I know and meet sometimes, we have different views on Russian and American politics. They think I am not objective. Excuse me, but are you objective? Why do you think that Russians should just follow what America says? America wants to tell other countries what to do. Russia does not follow orders. They think America is right, and Russia is wrong, and all Russians want is to meddle in the election... And one time one guy at some party, I don't even know him, he asked me several times, are you all still communists and Russians still want to live in [the] Soviet Union?... This is when I understood how people look at me here. He wanted to show that America is more developed, and Russia is not, backward. Ok, now I know what you think about us. I am Russian, I am not so developed.

Kera's account illustrates the criticism she encountered toward Russian society she understood as an attack on her Russian national background. At the same time, she went on to

explain how the tensions between her home and host nations have altered her perceptions of acceptance and belonging in a transnational environment. She said:

These conflicts between American and Russia definitely changed what I think about myself and my life. I feel like America is just the country where I live, and Russia is my motherland. We can't belong to Russia and America at the same time. I don't know if I will ever be accepted here as a real American. It doesn't mean that I don't want to, but I know that because I am Russian, I am different for Americans and especially now. I think that when Americans say to me that I think differently and defend Russia because I am Russian, you know they tell you, you are different, and you are not one of us, you are a foreigner. Like being from Russia was always important but it's kind of more important to me now. I am a part of Russian nation. When I listen to American media, for example, and they call Russia aggressive and hackers without evidence, something boils inside me.

Kera's account illustrates that in the context of U.S.-Russia relations she does not recognize herself as being accepted in the host society. She is convinced that her defense of her homeland is called into question primarily because of her Russian background. It is evident that Kera interpreted such suspicion as a form of denial of belonging. Such experiences force Kera to view herself primarily as a foreigner in the U.S., a foreigner who is not accepted as an equal in this national community. Moreover, her discussion reveals a change in her national identity with Russia. To be specific, in *Fractured Identities*, Harriet Bradley (1996) differentiates between passive and active identities. She argues that a passive identity is a construct of people's relationships, yet "individuals are not particularly conscious of passive identities and do not normally define themselves by them unless events occur which bring those particular relationships to the fore" (Bradley, 1996, p.25). Active identities for Bradley (1996) are those "which individuals are conscious of and which provide a base for their actions. They are positive elements in an individual's self-identification, although we do not necessarily think of ourselves continually in terms of any single identity" (p.26). Kera's reflections showcase a change of the state of her Russian national identity from passive to active. As Kera explained, she began to think about her belonging to Russia more frequently, and this identity became more valuable to her as a result of U.S.-Russia relations and antagonisms that she encountered criticizing U.S. approach to the Russian nation. The sense of non-belonging in the United States and a heightened identification with Russia that she fully embraces were also reiterated in the following statement:

Yes, life in Russia is hard, but my heart is still there. Isn't it obvious that if you are rejected in one place, you will look for another place to be a part of the community? I don't need to look for another country. I already know that Russia is my home, and the Russian people are my people. I feel terrible how Russia is treated, and I want to defend my country all the time. I am proud of my country and feel more love for my country.

Like Kera and all other participants, Zahar, a software engineer in his late thirties, was quite alarmed by the fact that U.S.-Russia relations have spiraled down so rapidly within the last several years. He was convinced that the lack of diplomatic cooperation between the two nations resulted in the ongoing ideological battle. At the same time, Zahar showed his support for Russian society while also expressing his belief that "American government simply doesn't like Russia, Putin, and wants to have more influence in those [post-Soviet countries] countries."

Zahar explained some of the mundane ways in which U.S.-Russia political tensions have impacted his life in the United States. While he mostly refrains from discussing U.S.-Russia relations at his workplace, he often talks about them with his acquaintances who are outside of his professional community. He admitted that he often uses social media sites and different Russian and U.S. political forums where he expresses and discusses his viewpoint on international politics that involve Russia and the United States.

My conversation with Zahar has also revealed that deterioration of U.S.-Russia ties and the socio-political environment that it has created have forced him to analyze more thoroughly what it means to be an American and why he cannot assert this identity. As a Russian immigrant, Zahar has always felt a social distance from the U.S. born residents. He recognized that coming from a different culture, there would be differences between him and U.S. natives. Yet, it is precisely the fact that people from various cultural and ethnic-racial backgrounds in U.S. society call themselves Americans that shaped Zahar's belief that he could also identify as American. However, he began to doubt his assumptions under the influence of U.S.-Russia relations, discovering that he was not regarded as belonging to U.S. society.

And you know, because of this, before I thought you could be anyone, there are like Chinese Americans, all kinds of nationalities and I thought that's what it means to be American. You can come from any nationality and be American. But now, with all that happened, I understand it's not so. American means you were born in America, and that's it. If you were not born here, then no. If you have some connection to another country, then no. Even if you have a passport, you are still not American... I cannot be an American, and I don't call myself that. People

[Americans] never openly discriminated [against] me, but it's just, in their mind, it's just I am Russian, I can't be American. I mean, they can say, yes, you are American by citizenship, but deeply they don't feel like that. When I tell someone, I am from Russia originally, there is a strange pause, and then you have this weird atmosphere. I don't want to be, to sound paranoid. Before I was not afraid to tell people that I am originally from Russia. But now, what they show on television, Russians are enemies, Russia is an enemy, I don't feel comfortable telling people. Others [Russian immigrants] say the same. They don't want to say that they are from Russia, even if they are against Putin.

It is necessary to point out that it was very important for Zahar to persuade me that he was not openly discriminated against in the United States. At the same time, he went on to provide examples of interactions that have strengthened his self-understanding as someone who was not viewed as an American. He said:

I try not to talk so much about problems in it [U.S.-Russia relations] at work, but I told my colleagues I don't support sanctions [U.S. sanctions against Russia]. And I told them don't believe everything about Ukraine and Russian hacking on the news, especially think about what America does in other countries. I think they [co-workers] were uncomfortable... People kind of made jokes, joking about me, about Russians spying. Before, it was just jokes about vodka, that stupid stuff. I don't want to complain, maybe it's just me, but I feel I am on the spot now. I don't take it personally but they remind you that I am not one of them, I am not American. Someone told me that being aggressive is what Russia does. They apologized later but everything is clear. Do you understand me? I think if I was American for them and if I had different views about Russia, they would just look at me that I am just an American who doesn't think that Russia hacked election. But because I'm Russian, my political opinion is un-American.

Zahar's account clearly indicates that U.S.-Russia relations have led to a shift in his conceptualization of American identity and his social position in U.S. society. In particular, the tensions in U.S.-Russia relations have created a context in which Zahar interprets verbal interactions with colleagues regarding U.S.-Russia ties as signals of his exclusion from the U.S. social fabric. Such experiences and feelings hinder Zahar from confidently claiming full membership in the United States. Yet, while Zahar is unable to assert U.S. national identity, he feels stronger attachments to Russian society today. He said,

I don't feel comfortable to say that I am an American and that I belong here. You really have to feel it, and I don't feel it. I understand people don't see me as an American but only as a Russian. If they thought I am American, they would not laugh about spying. Americans don't make, will not joke to each other about spying,

but to me, yes. That's why I don't feel American, and Americans don't think I am American.

Similar to those five immigrants who are critical of Russia's global behavior, these six immigrants agreed that they would also prefer to share a dual sense of belonging to their host and home countries. Asya, a foreign language teacher in her mid- forties, for instance, emphasized that a dual sense of belonging is something that she aspires to have. However, she argued that obtaining a transnational identity depends not only on her aspirations but also on her acceptance in the United States as an equal member of U.S. society.

In America, I want to say that I am Russian and still be viewed as American. For example, you sometimes see Italians who say they are Italian Americans, but they are viewed just as Americans. Why can't that be with Russians? Of course, today it doesn't happen because the U.S. wants Russia as an enemy, but I definitely want the freedom to say that I am American and Russian.

Lev, graphic designer in his early forties, also said that obtaining a sense of belonging to Russia and the United States would improve his life. More specifically, he argued that it would provide him security and strengthen his overall well-being as a transnational immigrant. Similar to other informants, he not only wants to enjoy living between the two nations, but also feel emotionally invested in two national communities. "I want to look at both flags, Russian and American, and imagine like its one flag in my life. Like they both fold into one... No, I can't do that now...But we can't predict future, though."

4.2.3 Narration of Dual non-belonging

While some study participants supported the position of either Russia or the United States in the tensions that have developed between the two nation-states since 2014, nine Russian immigrants questioned the goals and the global behaviors of both governments. This group of immigrants criticized the political approaches of both states toward each other, arguing that the two countries continuously compete for global power. Similar to other participants, this group has also addressed the question of belonging and the role that U.S.-Russia relations today play in shaping their social positions and identities in a transnational space. Even though they embrace their lives between the two cultural worlds, these immigrants' accounts show that U.S.-Russia

deteriorating relations and their political views have factored into their feelings of non-belonging to Russian and U.S. societies.

The question of belonging was especially an important one for Feliks, a financial coordinator in his late forties. He explained that living between the two nations fulfills his life in many aspects. His career in the United States provides him with financial stability, and his connections to his family and friends in Russia provide a support system that he could not obtain in U.S. society. This is why Feliks feels especially distressed with the fact that Russia and the United States are unable to work through their ideological differences diplomatically.

Reflecting on his political attitudes toward the ties between his home and host countries, Feliks claimed that in the current political realities, his political views make him an outsider in Russian society. He also feels like an outsider in the United States but mostly because of his Russian background, which distances him from U.S. nationals in today's political context. In the transnational space, heavily saturated with political tensions, it is "impossible," as Feliks explained, "to feel entirely accepted in both nations."

For me, there is not someone who is right and who is wrong. Both Russia and America are wrong. They have their agenda. I don't know why people believe that some politicians care about people. Both governments play with your national pride so you can support their lies, go to war for them, fight everyone, and assume there is an enemy. It's pure manipulation, and people just love to eat these lies because they want to feel significant like they have something significant to prove.

We don't talk enough about belonging. It's kind of unfortunate because I can't say that it's Russia or America. I don't think there is a place that I can call my true home right now... I also understand that it's better for me. What I want to say is that I feel better to say that I don't belong in two countries than accept what they do in other countries. Everything is clearer for me that way. You can't manipulate me and play on my emotions. I feel like my true self like I have my standards when it comes to politics... In Russia, for sure not, because I don't defend Russia and I live in America, so I am already in the "you are not one of us" status there. In America, I am also "not one of us" kind of person because I am from Russia, and I can be a spy, or I can be a Putinist.

Scholars argue that national belonging is significant as it brings order into people's lives and helps them to get rid of the fear of uncertainty in a disorderly world (Skey, 2013). Moreover, as Yuval-Davis (2011) has pointed out, a sense of belonging is "critical to people's emotional balance and well-being" (p.200). The reflections that Feliks shared with me, however, reveal that it is a sense of dual non-belonging that he embraces which provides him with more

emotional stability and order in life. Feliks is not willing to compromise his political views that the global actions of Russia and the United States are destructive to the world. Therefore, a decision to disassociate himself from both countries is significant to his well-being today.

Feliks's political reflections in some way crossed with those of Mila, a marketing manager in her late thirties. She also suggested that Russian and U.S. leaders manipulate and pit Russian and U.S. social communities against each other to raise their own popularity and to strengthen control over their respective nations. At the same time, she confessed that as someone who is trying to build her life between the two countries, she is concerned not only about what happens between Russia and the United States today but also about the future direction of U.S.-Russia relations.

I am worried about what will happen in the future. It's already difficult for Russians to get a visa to the United States, and we don't know what's going to happen later. I hope we don't go back to that time when people didn't travel to each other's countries. That would be horrible. That isolationist times.

Through an extensive conversation with Mila, I also learned that the deterioration of political relations between her home and host countries had had an impact on her relationships with family members in Russia and the United States. She also felt compelled to share that she has encountered hostility in U.S. society because of her national origin. Here is what she said:

Talking to my family in Russia about U.S.-Russia relations is very difficult. They only defend Russia and can't be very critical. I feel that because I live in America, anything I say to point out how Russia's actions are damaging for society, people react to it defensively. They think I criticize Russia to show that America is better. That's how it is. But that's not what I am trying to do.

Here, in America, it's also an interesting situation. I can give you an example. Once, some stranger in some store asked me about my accent and where I come from. So, I said I am from Russia. And his response was, "Are you happy that our president is Putin's puppet?" It wasn't a safe situation for me, so I did not engage with this man, but it just shook me what he said. He made me responsible for what he thinks Russia did during [the U.S. presidential] election. I deal with this unfriendly, I would say, situations in both countries.

The hostile environment these developments have produced forced Mila to think deeper not only about her social status as a woman who lives a transnational life but also to imagine what changes need to take place within and between the two countries for her to feel included in

both societies. While she is not fully certain such changes will emerge, she expressed optimism that a new strategy may be developed to mend U.S.-Russia political ties. She stated:

I want to feel at home in Russia and America. At the end of the day, Russia is where I was born, and I am still connected to it, and I have a family here. Of course, I want to feel welcomed back in Russia and also here, but what I want is one thing, and how people will treat me is another thing. You can't truly feel at home if others do not welcome you. I want Russia and America to cooperate better. I sometimes doubt things will change because we have these problems for so long now, but I am not giving up. Times change, history changes. We can only hope for the better.

Similar to Mila, Yana, a sales specialist in non-profit sector in her early thirties, expressed her desire to belong to both nations because she intends to continue a transnational form of living. Yet, it is not the feeling that she is comfortable claiming today. Like several other participants, Yana is often afraid to disclose to other people that she has a Russian background. At the same time, she articulated her growing feelings of detachment from Russian society where her political views are perceived as anti-patriotic.

I don't feel like I am a part of American society at all right now. I feel very uncomfortable telling people here that I am Russian. Maybe it's just me, but I don't want to say to them I am Russian because I am afraid of how they would react. I've heard different stories about others being negative to Russians, I didn't experience that myself, but I don't tell people where I am from. I guess it's because of the media. American news show Russia only negatively.

If I talk about Russia, well, I can say that culturally and emotionally, I think of Russia as my first country, where I belong. Still, it's not a full feeling because I don't like Russian politics today. I don't belong in Putin's Russia.

Articulating her feelings concerning non-belonging, Yana has also emphasized that she has a global identity. More specifically, she called herself "a citizen of the world" who sees the world as one big community. Being a "global citizen" (Dower & Williams, 2003) grounds Yana and shapes her political position, critical of Russia's and U.S. global actions.

I think of myself as a global citizen. I don't believe that people have to live only in one place and just communicate with the same people. If I could travel more today, I would. But it's just not very cheap. Politically, I don't like it when countries interfere in other countries. I care about other societies. I feel like we all have the right to have a good life, not just in some countries. That's why I don't think countries like America or Russia have any right to get into other countries and tell them what to do.

Yana's views on cultural attachments to Russia and dual non-belonging were echoed in Lada's reflections as she explained how she navigates the transnational environment influenced by the political instabilities in U.S.-Russia relations. Lada is a financial support specialist in her late forties. In Lada's view, Russia and the United States act on their imperialist ambitions by interfering in other countries' domestic affairs. As a person with connections to both nations, Lada found herself in an awkward position. In Russia, she is expected to defend Russia's international politics, while in the United States, people assume that she would speak in defense of U.S. global politics. However, Lada's criticism of Russia and the United States, as she found, distance her from both nations.

Yes, of course, I am Russian, and I respect Russian culture because I was born in that culture. But I don't agree with what Russia is doing today, so I don't want to identify with a society that is fine with wars and wants to prove something to others. We have too many social issues there, and it's necessary to focus on corruption, poverty, lack of jobs, bad economy, and not go to other countries and grab their territories or influence election. But when I say something like that to my friends in Russia, it's a disaster for me. They just say, "Ok, American, we don't need your lessons." Because I am Russian, they think I have to defend only Russia. But in America, it's also funny. In America, I have to protect America and believe everything that American media and politicians say. They only want to talk negatively about Russia, and I have to agree with everything. I don't like this either, and I don't associate myself with such America. I want to identify with countries that are honest about their politics and their intentions.

Narrating their political stances and experiences, this group of nine immigrants has also expressed their hope that the United States and Russia would soon improve their international relations. They anticipate that once U.S.-Russia relations reach a new and positive level, they will have more confidence to claim Russian and U.S. societies as spaces and nations where they entirely belong. Comments made by Vadim, an international development expert in his mid-thirties, and Roman, a restaurant executive director in his mid-forties, illustrate these points.

Vadim:

Every sane person wants a healthy life. Everyone wants to be happy. Of course, I want to say that Russia and America are my countries and that people in both countries treat me with respect. That's a genuine feeling I have. But I can't say that now. And these politics don't make things better. Well, maybe one day I will say that I am Russian and American at the same time. Can you tell me if there are Russians who feel comfortable both there and here?

Roman:

I want Russia and America to get along. These are two powerful countries, and they should get along. I wish people didn't need a visa to go to Russia or America. It would make life so much better for all of us. People can learn about each other and then even if you are an immigrant. You can be equal in both countries and not worry that they will dislike you because you are Russian or you live in America. I want to say openly that I am Russian here but also not feel guilty about living here [in America]. I want to feel comfortable in both countries... Yes, I want to say that I belong in both countries.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

Russian immigrants' accounts in this chapter once again make it evident that they are now used to their transnational lifestyles. Immigrants highlight that the transnational form of life benefits these individuals both in material and social ways. The benefits that such experience provides motivates immigrants to embrace transnationalism. However, while immigrants find positive aspects in living between the two countries, the more recent deterioration of political relations between Russia and the United States creates a context and experiences which factor into Russian immigrants' inability to claim a transnational identity, or in other words, a sense of simultaneous belonging to Russian and U.S. nations.

In particular, the narratives show that engaging with U.S.-Russia political ties, Russian immigrants have developed a diverse set of views on the role and the responsibilities of Russia and the United States in how the relationships between the two countries are developing. The diversity of opinions that Russian professionals make it clear that immigrants should not be essentialized as homogenous collectives who speak "with a unified cultural voice" (Yuval-Davis, 1993, p.627). At the same time, these diverse views have elicited hostile reactions both in Russia and the United States, shaping immigrants' notions of belonging.

Some immigrants, as the accounts show, do not assert a transnational identity because, while they feel connected to U.S. society, they report feelings of estrangement from today's Russia. They claim not to share Russia's political values and criticize Russia's global behavior. Such criticism has elicited hostile reactions from their family and friends in Russia, leaving these immigrants with a sense of exclusion from Russian society.

Other immigrants, on the other hand, report feelings of connectedness with Russia and a sense of detachment from the United States. In this sense, they also lack a sense of dual

belonging. In the context of U.S.-Russia deteriorating ties, they emphasize with Russian society. Echoing Russian political and media discourse, these immigrants argue that the United States seeks to diminish Russia's national and global power. They narrate hostile reactions to their political views and identities as immigrants with Russian origins in the United States to mark the experiences shaping their sense of non-belonging in their adoptive country.

At the same time, some immigrants narrate a sense of non-belonging both to Russia and the United States. Their sentiments stem from their political views critical of Russia and the United States as imperial powers. Their feelings of non-belonging are also fueled by their encounters with antagonisms both in Russia and the United States as responses to their political views and identities as Russian immigrants.

All immigrants, as this chapter illustrates, provided specific examples of the hostilities they encountered either in Russia or the United States or in both countries. Most of these examples capture immigrants' political discussions around U.S.-Russia relations with the closest people and others in Russia or the United States. While immigrants used these interactions as examples of hostilities countered toward their political views, they also interpreted these exchanges as mechanisms communicating exclusion and immigrants' non-belonging either in Russian or U.S. societies or both.

Russian immigrants' stories illustrate the nexus between identity and international relations. They also emphasize the challenges of building lives between the two nations. While immigrants report different experiences with U.S.-Russia relations, several aspects unite this immigrant cohort. In particular, the improvement of U.S.-Russia relations is also one of the elements of political developments that Russian immigrants desire to see. Moreover, all Russian immigrants in this study reported a hope to, one day, obtain a sense of belonging both to Russia and the United States and to claim a transnational identity. They understand that for them to do so, their home and host countries must eradicate the tensions that shape today's cross-border environment in which immigrants live.

But what do Russian immigrants do to improve the ties between the two nations? What role do these transnational immigrants think they play in foreign relations between Russia and the United States? Do they attempt to influence the trajectory of political ties between their home and host countries? These are the questions that I address in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5. RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS' EFFORTS TO REDUCE TENSIONS BETWEEN HOMELAND AND HOSTLAND

One of the topics that scholars tend to focus on when analyzing immigration phenomena is immigrant activism. Scholars typically want to know how do immigrants engage in activist strategies or and what motivates them to be more socially active? What scholars find is that, indeed, immigrants develop various forms of activism around various social issues that directly impact their lives. For example, immigrants collectively mobilize themselves and organize political protests against socio-political and economic oppression that they experience as laborers in a host country. Some organize pressure groups and establish non-profit organizations to defend their rights as marginalized ethno-racial communities discriminated against in a new state (Pallares, 2015; Zepeda-Millán, 2017; Gabrielli, Gsir & Zapata-Barrero, 2017). At the same time, activism often spans international borders enabling immigrants to participate in their homeland where they resist political and economic injustices that devastate their communities of origin (Quinsaat, 2019).

Scholarly efforts also underline that immigrants play a significant role in impacting international relations between their home and host nations. For instance, scholars find that immigrant individuals build different interest groups to foster cultural, political, and business cooperation between the two nations (Hooper & Goves, 2017). Immigrant groups conduct advocacy work through which they hope to influence the host country's policies and legislation toward their country of origin (Chakravorty, Kapur & Singh, 2017). What scholars seek to reveal are the various ways in which immigration is not only an economic phenomenon but also a phenomenon that advances international collaboration throughout the world.

In this chapter, I similarly draw attention to the ways in which Russian immigrants use their transnational positions to impact relations between Russian and U.S. societies in the context of the U.S.-Russia political crisis. As I show, Russian immigrants' contributions to the improvement of relations between the two nations are not expressed through large-scale collective pursuits, but rather through small-scale individual acts. In what follows, I first illustrate Russian immigrants' use of transnational informal dialogues to raise social awareness

and sympathy between the two nations. I then discuss informal activities that two immigrants, Roman and Lera, organize in the United States to counter the hostile environment that the deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations has recently produced. Roman, a restaurant executive director in his mid-forties, for instance, hosts private house parties to encourage a more favorable image of Russian society among U.S. nationals. Concerned about the future of U.S.-Russia relations, Lera, a social development professional in her mid-forties, conducts informal presentations about Russia in the U.S. middle school to stimulate an appreciation of Russian society and culture in the United States. As this chapter shows, engaging with U.S.-Russia tensions through individual acts, Russian immigrants's main goal is to persuade Russian and U.S. societies not to view each other as enemy nations.

The significance that I attach to Russian immigrants' small scale efforts have been shaped by my own and other scholars' convictions that to understand how individuals engage with political processes of local or international levels, it is crucial to examine not only the nature of the official grand events but also to pay attention to people's every day, and often invisible, decisions and acts (see, e.g., Scott, 1990; Scott, 2008; Bourdieu, 1977; de Certeau, 1984; Richter-Devroe, 2018). Such an approach provides more substantial insights into people's daily realities. It reveals people's roles as socially active subjects, even in those contexts where it is least expected. Guided by such a scholarly view, I take a closer look at informal and individual ways through which Russian immigrants seek to improve ties between Russian and U.S. societies. In doing so, my goal here is also to demonstrate that Russian immigrants are not merely onlookers who passively accept the impacts of bilateral deteriorating ties but are active subjects who work to unite their home and host nations.

5.1 Transnational Dialogue to Raise Social Awareness and Sympathy between Russian and U.S. Societies.

I became interested in understanding how Russian immigrants counter the hostile environment between Russia and the United States after I had an interview with Kera, a communication specialist in her early forties. When we met, Kera was eager to share her opinions about the tensions in U.S.-Russia ties and to explain what she does to bring the two nations closer together. Kera told me the following:

You know, I want to change what happens between Russia and America but in my way. I don't want to be a part of any organization. I know that some Russian or American organizations do that here, but for me, it is easier just to talk, to have a casual dialogue with people and tell them about Russia, and tell Russians about America. I think that works better.

Kera was correct to point out that numerous Russian and Russian-American organizations in the United States work to improve today's U.S.-Russia relations. Some of these include the Russian Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., the Russian American Foundation and the American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation.¹ The primary goal of these organizations is to help Russian immigrants integrate into the United States. At the same time, they also run various projects that promote cooperation between Russian and U.S. institutions that work in spheres such as education, business, medicine, and science. But since Kera was not involved in official organizations, I was more interested in understanding how Kera uses informal dialogue to foster a positive environment between her home and host countries.

Scholars define dialogue as “a culturally and historically specific way of social discourse accomplished through the use of language and verbal transactions” (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005, p.4). More than just a form of communication, dialogue is also “a relation that we create and sustain by conjoint agreement and shared discourse (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005, p.5). Dialogue allows people to work through differences (Martin, 2005). It “is characterized by inclusion and a reciprocal sharing, such as the individuals become one in and with each other” (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005, p.5). Dialogue is a practice used to arrive at a new understanding of the world while thinking collectively “in order to come to shared understanding” (Marin, 2005, p.99).

Many scholars avoid characterizing dialogues as forms of activism. At the same time, while dialogues may initially seem trivial, they are nevertheless often used as significant strategies to create inclusive cooperation leading toward social change (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012). Furthermore, practitioners such as the *Sustained Dialogue Institute* emphasize that dialogues can,

¹ For more information on these organizations, see the following websites:

The Russian Cultural Center - <http://rccusa.org/>

The Russian American Foundation- <https://www.russianamericanfoundation.org/>

The American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation- <http://www.a-rccf.org/>

lead to social change by changing individuals and their worldviews through deep listening and learning (“What,” 2020).

Perspectives offered by scholars and practitioners concerning the function of a dialogue in a society are reflected in Kera’s understanding of this form of communication. Kera considers “dialogue as something that most people do all the time, every day, so it’s the activity that we do the most in our lives.” She also considers “dialogue like a thread that can make people think differently about each other, even if it takes time.” It is precisely this communication approach that became the main instrument that she employs to raise social awareness and sympathy between Russian and U.S. nationals. Kera explained:

I kind of feel if you go on the streets and protest sanctions or you say, criticize Russia or America, you can get in trouble. Just conversations with regular people are safe. I listen to them what they know, and they will listen to me and what I tell them about Russia or America. I just create conversations... In America, I mainly speak with colleagues. Some neighbors, I know. In my work, I meet new people all the time. I speak with Russians [in Russia] all the time. I told you about it before. My friends, family, other people. I just want people to understand our social problems, and to feel for each other, instead of fighting.

Our conversation with Kera made it clear that she is quite intentional in her attempts to influence how Russian and U.S. nationals think of each other through informal discussions. She consciously introduces into a conversation those themes that focus on social issues that affect both countries in similar ways, including poverty, substance abuse, and homelessness. Consider, for instance, Kera’s example of the dialogues she builds:

I can tell that [Russian and American] people do not know much about these countries. I feel like Russians don’t know much about regular Americans, and they are more upset with Americans. Americans, they are just suspicious of Russians, but they can hide their feelings...It bothers me how upset people are in Russia or here [the United States]. I mean Russians speak so negatively about Americans. Americans are afraid that all these Russians hate their democracy or something like that. I kind of say, we have more in common... When I talk to Russians, I tell them about poverty in America, nothing romantic. So, they don’t have this illusion about this country. But I also tell Americans about Russian poverty and what it looks like. I also talk about drugs and alcohol abuse. I mean, Americans like to laugh that Russians drink much vodka, but Americans use a lot of drugs. In that way, we have many similar issues. I mean in Russia some drink because they deal with real life and in America, it’s the same way...When you tell people in Russia and here [in the United States] about these situations, there is a different reaction. I bring up homelessness, too; they are relevant to Russians and Americans. It’s like you tell them about real-life problems, and they understand that political fighting is political,

but real people suffer everywhere. My point is that I want to show that people suffer here [in the United States] and there [in Russia]. So instead of fighting, I say, look, we need to think about how we can help Russian and American people.

Kera often compares social inequalities with which Russian and Americans struggle in their everyday lives. By highlighting similarities between the people in her home and host countries, she strives to counteract antagonistic perceptions or misunderstandings that both societies nurturer about each other today. Kera does not hold such conversations daily, yet, she often resorts to this tactic, and especially in those moments when her transnational contacts address U.S.-Russia relations specifically. Kera explained:

In general, I find that having people to people conversations is best. I can talk about these issues because I see them in both countries and people listen... I do that always when someone starts talking about problems in our [U.S.-Russia] relations, and I do that to tell that we don't need conflicts, and there are other issues we can focus on. I worry about both countries. It's important to me. My life is here and there, and, honestly, there is no need for conflict... When I start telling people in Russia how Americans suffer or when you tell Americans what Russian people go through, it does kind of change how people think and look at others. I mean, you would think that people would just ignore, but they take such issues seriously. When you talk about pain, I guess, people become sympathetic.

To my surprise, all other participants stated that they also frequently use transnational dialogues to raise social awareness between Russian and U.S. nationals. Some participants like Feliks, a financial coordinator in his late forties, for example, do it more often than others. Just like Kera, Feliks was not interested in joining official organizations or institutions of political nature, and especially those which are supported by Russian or U.S. government. Critical of the U.S. and Russia's global policies, Feliks avoids contributing to these countries' foreign affairs through his work. Instead, he often engages in informal dialogues with U.S. nationals to defy misconceptions that exist about Russian society. Here is how Feliks commented on his efforts:

Relations between our countries are awful, right? I don't have the magic power to make things right. All I can do is try to help Americans understand that we are [Russians] not such bad people. Even if politicians want us to think that we should be enemies, at least I can challenge that point... I can do it by just talking to people. I have this position. ...Well, for example, I talk with Americans about Russians. I educate about Russian society and our background... Usually, with colleagues or if I go out with friends and I meet new Americans, you have to talk about politics and so I use that opportunity... I explain things about what ordinary Russians worry about, like, their health, income. I don't want Americans to think that we come here to spy or that all Russians do is spy on Americans. I want Americans to understand

that Russians are also people. Russia is a big country, and you can't think that all Russians hate America. There are a lot of Russians who are very interested in American culture, and they want to visit this country. I think this is what Americans need to know. I kind of challenge the stereotype that Americans have now. I mean that Russians just want to get into their computers and things like that.

Feliks's efforts are, of course, not unique to his immigrant experience. Writing about Lebanese immigrant cultural workers, Daila Abdelhady (2011), for example, found that immigrant artists, poets, musicians, and scholars use their work to represent Lebanese society in a positive light and to challenge misrepresentations of their cultural roots in the host communities. Nevertheless, they are extremely meaningful to him as an immigrant in the United States who is now forced to navigate a hostile environment between the two countries.

At the same time, Feliks also tries to advance a positive image of his host community when he discusses U.S.-Russia relations with his counterparts in his homeland. To contribute to peacebuilding between the two nations, he uses his transnational position to persuade Russian society to perceive U.S. nationals as fellow human beings rather than as the domineering enemies. Feliks explained:

I often talk about Americans with Russians.... I talk to my friends, family and some former colleagues. It's kind of gotten out of hand, to be honest, what some Russian people say about Americans. When I hear them talk about America, it shocks me how frustrated some people are. So, I start bombarding them with my opinions and ask them to open their minds and realize that American politicians are playing their games and that I doubt that all, how many, three hundred million Americans hate Russia... I kind of remind these people that at the end of the day, Americans are similar people to Russians. Even if we disagree with these [American] politicians, it doesn't mean Russia should hate the whole country. I mean, Russians believe that America wants to control them, but I just think it's not true. At least every day Americans don't care about that. I say that there are plenty of hard-working American people, so why hate the whole country?

Similar to Kera, the reasons that motivate Feliks to use dialogue to counter hostilities between the two nations are his concern for both societies and his transnational ties. Feliks cannot remain indifferent to the fate of U.S.-Russia relations. Moreover, he firmly believes that U.S.-Russia political tensions have to be challenged immediately for the benefit of the future Russian and U.S. generations. This is how Feliks explained his position:

I care because I live in these countries. I mean, Russia is my homeland, and America is where I live now. Whether you want it or not, you still worry, and you try to

understand what's happening and why that's happening...For me, it is also about our children. What our countries are doing now is like teaching them that it is ok to hate some people who live so far away just because they have different ideas. It's crazy. I don't think our children need a lesson like that. We can be better at teaching how to respect others.

Other Russian immigrants have similarly expressed that the deterioration of U.S.-Russia ties not only damages U.S. and Russian social communities today but also leaves a negative impact on the future generations of both nations. Lada, a financial support specialist in her late forties, for instance, argued that U.S. and Russian political officials have to cooperate so that “young Russians and Americans don't grow up hating one another. These politicians want us to hate, but our children shouldn't grow up with such feelings.” To encourage more understanding between the two nations, Lada also pushes forward a more positive image of Russia and the United States in her dialogues with transnational interlocutors. She holds such conversations with people closest to her in both countries. She also frequently uses social media to engage in political conversations. Social media provides an expansive terrain for information dissemination, enabling individuals to reach larger audiences. As scholars emphasize, it is a tool that fosters the sharing of voices, providing space for self-expression and representation (Rosenstein, 2018). For Lada, too, social media is a space where she expresses her voice and disseminates information, encouraging Russian and U.S. nationals to resist a political discourse that positions both societies against each other. This is what she told me:

I am sure you experienced it when you read the news or watch some videos on Facebook; for example, you can leave comments. I do that all the time. A lot of news I get from social media. Very often, then you can have several people who start saying horrible things about Russians or when Russians say something nasty about Americans. They won't be punished, so they say these things. I get in the middle of it. I want to challenge them. To Russians, I say that instead of bashing America for everything, we should just think about what is happening to the Russian economy... I give an example of how Americans are very entrepreneurial people. How people work hard here. I always explain there are also many Americans who struggle financially. They also have family values, because Russians have this stereotype that Americans don't have good families... With Americans, I do kind of the same thing. I just say that Russians are not the aggressors that Americans think, and they are also normal people with families, their jobs. They are also busy trying to provide for families. I just want these people to think that we can't just listen to media, we should just understand that we are people that we need to be friends.

Learning about Lada's immigration experiences, I also found out that she attends an informal reading group in the town where she resides. This reading group consists of around ten people in their late forties and fifties. All but Lada are U.S.-born nationals. Being a member of this reading group gives Lada an opportunity to learn more about U.S. culture through U.S. literature. At the same time, she uses this space to discuss Russian American authors and their works and to educate U.S. nationals about the interconnection between Russian and U.S. peoples, histories, and cultures. Her account provides an insight into how she utilizes her reading group participation to encourage socio-cultural curiosity toward Russia among U.S. nationals.

I am a member of this group for some time now. We just get together because we read different books, and then we discuss them... It's not official. It's just some people I know organize such things. Sometimes we have new people. It is not official like I said. We get together, and we drink wine or tea, coffee, whatever you like. Bring some snacks. You know how it is with Americans. And then we just talk about the different books we read. Sometimes we read similar things. It's fun.... I started attending it because I wanted to improve my English, and my colleague suggested that I read more and talk about what I read. And so, in this group, I often talk about Russian society. People seem interested. And for me, it is easier to provide some comparison. But the funny thing was for them when I told them about Russian American authors. Russian immigrants. Like you know, [Vladimir] Nabokov, [Joseph] Brodsky. It was kind of an illustration of how Russians contribute to American society...I'd say that it was eye-opening for some of them because when I talked about these people, I was so proud of talking about Russian writers... I think when I talk about Russian American authors, I kind of remind them that Americans also need to learn about Russians and how our countries are connected... I would say it helps to respect each other more. You don't hear on the news about what things connect these countries. It's all about division and arguments. But when you talk about how people connect countries, it changes their perspective.

All Russian immigrants in this study admitted that while using dialogue to improve the environment between the two countries may seem like a minor act, it is, indeed, a highly challenging activity. In fact, thirteen immigrants reported that they often felt discouraged to discuss Russian and U.S. societies with others to avoid hostile reactions from their dialogue partners. Asya, a foreign language teacher in her mid-forties, for example, claimed that at times she avoids initiating exchanges of opinions directly related to U.S.-Russia relations. As someone

who has experienced hostile reactions to her defense of Russia's position in the U.S.-Russia political discord in the host community, Asya prefers to steer away from the subject of U.S.-Russia political ties. Instead, she relies on her professional background in education to reorient the discussion toward a comparative analysis of Russian and U.S. educational systems. She has worked in both educational systems and had seen first-hand that millions of Russian and American young people continue to lack access to higher education. By focusing on the educational hardships of Russian and American young people, Asya's goal is to raise her transnational interlocutors' awareness about each other's countries' social issues and to convince ordinary citizens to be more concerned about youth in their nations.

Asya finds such conversations more meaningful and productive. However, even these dialogues entice negative responses from her interlocutors. Asya explained:

I am often asked about U.S.-Russia relations. People always want me to talk about it. To be honest, sometimes I try not to talk about it myself because people get irritated. I change the topic; I speak about problems in education. How young people here [in the United States] and in Russia, mostly poor young people don't have opportunities to go to college because colleges and universities want to charge so much money...When I speak about these problems in education, I just want to show that nobody is better. But some Russians or Americans become rude, and they so freely say something really unacceptable to me. Yes, in Russia and in America people told me if I don't like in these countries I can just leave. It's because of this tension one nation thinks it's better or how to say it, and it's like stronger than the other. Russians think that Russia is better than America, and America is weak, American education is weak, American politicians are weak. Don't get me wrong, I am glad that Russia can stand up for itself, but I don't think we should be arrogant about it...Americans always think they are better than others and now with all this conversation about Russians hacking their election. Russians are now villains, poor, bad economy, aggressive people, and politicians, and America is so innocent and just so democratic and better than Russia. I will still talk about problems. They [Russians and Americans] get upset because they know I am right, and they can't disagree with me because they see those issues, too.

Like Asya, all other study participants believe that in today's political environment, many Russian and U.S. nationals feel emboldened to express their hostile views toward the opposite nation. Moreover, many were troubled by the fact that it is becoming more acceptable in both countries to openly apply stereotypes to justify their opposition to the other nation. Lev, a graphic designer in his early forties, for example, insisted that deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations has expanded a sense of prejudice among Russian and U.S. citizens toward each other.

It is an opinion that he developed based on the conversations that he has had with people in both countries. Yet, to illustrate how he attempts to change and improve opinions of Russian and U.S. nationals about each other's societies, he recounted several episodes from his transnational informal interactions where he combatted the negative stereotypes that have emerged in both nation-states. Lev shared:

People [Russian and U.S. citizens] feel normal calling each other all kinds of names today. Russians call Americans enemies to humiliate them. Americans think Russians are spies and hackers. Everyone lives in a world of stereotypes. Some Americans still think that Russians drink vodka all day long, and there are literally bears running on the streets. But Russians are no better. They just want to say that Americans are immoral; they just want to destroy everything, eat bad food, lazy, uneducated... I think these stereotypes are even worse today because of what happened, Ukraine, election... When I speak to Russians and other people I know, I just resist, openly and harshly, actually. I talked to this one [Russian] guy. We used to work together, and he was just curious about what I do in my new job here. Then he started talking to me about Ukraine and then he said something like, calling Americans stupid, they just want to go into every country and just take over as if all Americans want to do that. I mean, it's the stereotype Russians have, and I was irritated that he so easily used it and so quickly. How is that helping us? And then I said, but at least there is not much corruption in America like in Russia and Russians can't do anything about it. Who is really stupid here? But that's media for you. So brainwashed by the media, so of course, some conversations like that happen, and I just have to stop that.

During my time in the field, I also learned that none of the immigrants held strong convictions that transnational dialogues alone could radically change the course of U.S.-Russia relations today. The power of media and the political elites to shape the dominant ideas about international relations and different nations is much more significant and cannot be entirely challenged by interpersonal interactions. However, they all maintained that dialogues are significant tools in persuading Russian and U.S. nationals to see each other as respected equals. Yura, a senior specialist in the information technology (IT) sector in his mid-fifties, for instance, provided specific examples of why he considers transnational informal dialogues useful interventions to combat Russian and U.S. nationals' perceptions of each other as rivalry nations. His comments reflected the voices of other informants. Yura said:

It's clear that just if we talk to Americans or Russians, we can't change everything in one night. But I think these conversations are still valuable. I know that people listen to me and because I am here [in the United States] and there [in Russia], and I know what is going on and how both countries live...Of course, some people get

upset and even hate when I say nice things about America, for example, or nice things about Russia. I mean the environment is such that you can't expect everyone to think nicely about another country, so you just say what you can to make others realize that we should be friends and not enemies. It's not easy, and even conversations are not easy to build, but we need them. Some respond well, and some say I change their minds a little bit. Not many people, I will be honest. But even if one person starts to think more critically about Russia or American people, I am happy. I feel like I've done something good for both countries, and I will continue doing it.

As Yura's comments show, transnational dialogues are complex and can create more resentment between dialogue partners. However, an opportunity to impact Russian and U.S. nationals' imaginary of each other's countries encourages Russian immigrants to continue using dialogues to bring more understanding between the two nations.

In the next sections, I continue the conversation around Russian immigrants' informal attempts to counter the hostile environment between Russian and U.S. societies. Besides resorting to informal dialogues, these immigrants organize informal events to create sentiments of connectedness among U.S. nationals toward Russia. Their accounts further our understanding of Russian transnational immigrants and their experiences with the divide in U.S.-Russia relations.

5.2 Roman: "My Parties are About Peace Now."

Although I have already introduced Roman in the previous chapters, let me briefly touch upon his background. Roman came to the United States as a young adult. His family made a transformative life decision to move to a new country for better economic opportunities and a better life. Despite difficulties of cultural adjustment that Roman continues to struggle with till today, he considers himself a very successful immigrant, especially in the financial area of his life. He received higher education in the United States. Currently, Roman owns a restaurant business. As Roman emphasized during our interview, he affords and appreciates a comfortable upper-middle-class lifestyle in a new society.

Just like all other study informants, Roman was disappointed with the rapid deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations since 2014. Convinced that Russia and the United States have imperialistic ambitions to control the world order, Roman is critical of both Russian and U.S.

foreign policies toward each other and other nation-states. At the same time, he also believes that being simply critical and not looking for ways to challenge the negative perceptions that Russian and U.S. societies are being fed about each other by Russian and U.S. political leadership and media provides no solution to the political crisis.

Similar to other immigrants, Roman has not engaged in any political Russian or U.S. organizations. Instead, he prefers to advance a favorable image of Russian society in the United States in other ways. Specifically, Roman often hosts informal house parties to encourage U.S. nationals to have a friendly attitude toward Russians.

During my time in field, Roman invited me to attend one of his parties. I gladly accepted the invitation to attend it as I did not want to miss the opportunity to learn about Roman's experiences in the United States. On the day of the party, I arrived around fifteen minutes after the designated time. Despite my tardiness, he welcomed me to his home with a kind smile. When I entered his residence, I found myself in a very spacious area. Although I could not initially see any other guests, I sensed a very positive environment in Roman's home. I could hear other people laughing and chatting through the sounds of dance music that was playing in the background. Roman and I slowly walked into the living area where all of his other guests gathered.

There were sixteen people of different genders present at his party. Roman introduced me to a few of his guests before one of them asked Roman for a private conversation. While Roman was away, I decided to continue introducing myself to other guests. As I began talking to others, I found out that the guests were a very diverse group of people. These were immigrants from the former Soviet Union, including Russia, as well as U.S. nationals of different ethno-racial backgrounds. Several people told me that this was not their first time at Roman's gathering and that they quite enjoyed coming to his Russian parties. These statements surprised and captured my attention as I tried to understand what specifically made Roman's party "Russian." Was it the food and beverages that Roman provided that characterized this party as Russian? That could not have been the case because Roman provided various gourmet crackers, French cheeses and meat appetizers, fresh fruit, and vegetables to treat his guests. None of these foods represented traditional Russian cuisine. Although Roman had Russian alcoholic beverages for his guests, the choice options also included U.S. vodka, French and U.S. wine, German and Mexican beer, and a variety of fruit juices. Music that played at this party was also not Russian or, at least, not with

the lyrics in the Russian language. We mainly listened to U.S. pop and R&B songs and electronic music with English lyrics.

Confused by what makes Roman's party Russian, I decided to probe guests for their opinions. Most guests responded that Roman's background, his Russian origin in particular, is what made them refer to this house gathering as a Russian party. Their responses made it clear that although Roman has been living in the United States for over fifteen years, his national origin is the main prism through which people view Roman and his actions in a host country.

Throughout the evening, most people engaged in various conversations in small circles. I carefully followed Roman to listen to his interactions with guests. Conversations were very diverse, covering topics around climate change, global economic issues, physical and mental health, and even the cost of plastic surgeries worldwide. Some also discussed U.S.-Russia relations, focusing specifically on the alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election in 2016. Those who addressed Russia's attempts to influence U.S. presidential election readily expressed their views and opinions. Some doubted that Russia could have any impact on the outcome of the election. Others, however, were confident that the Russian government has, indeed, interfered to help Donald Trump win the presidential race.

During the whole evening, Roman made sure to speak to all guests present in his home. He also made sure to ask guests to attend to food and drinks. I caught Roman asking his guests if they had enough to eat and if they needed anything else several times during the party. Roman's goal was to create a highly enjoyable atmosphere.

Not once did I hear Roman bring up the deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations when speaking to others. He kept his conversations very light, asking his guests about their families, careers, vacation plans, and their hobbies. Roman was more interested in understanding the individual lives and the experiences of his guests than to discuss the clash between Russia and the United States. Because Roman kept the environment at his party very open and friendly, the guests appeared happy and relaxed. It was also clear that the guests enjoyed themselves and had humorous conversations as I could hear them laughing consistently throughout the evening.

The party lasted for about three hours. As guests were leaving, they all thanked Roman for his hospitality and kindness. Roman promised to organize a similar party shortly and to invite everyone back. He thanked each guest for coming and for sharing their time with him. I left the party almost at the same time as all the other guests.

After visiting Roman's party, I contacted him again. I asked him for an interview as I hoped to understand what such informal gatherings mean for him as an immigrant from Russia, considering today's context of the antagonistic U.S.-Russia relations. Roman happily agreed to meet to help me learn more about his life. During the interview, Roman explained that he has been hosting similar parties for over a decade. However, the meanings that he attaches to them have expanded once U.S.-Russia relations began to deteriorate in 2014. He explained:

I've had so many of such parties, but it's not just about fun. It's not just about just getting together and just entertainment. It's about that and also about friendship...My parties are about peace now. Americans think of me as a Russian. I don't think that will ever change. I think about my parties, and I think they help Americans understand that not all Russians are terrible people. I feel like I am showing that there are Russians who can be kind to Americans. I don't want them to think that Russians are enemies. That's what TV wants you to think. I'd say, I want Americans to have good opinions about Russians. You were at my party so you can have your own opinion, but I try to be friendly and just give them positive energy. It's really about how people feel. They can read so much about Russia, but how they feel, I'd say it can only come from people.

Roman's desire to promote a positive image of Russian society is informed by his overall goal to influence U.S. nationals not to think of Russia as the enemy state. Yet, his goal is not simply transnational but has a larger scope. Specifically, it is shaped by his cosmopolitan aspirations. By cosmopolitan aspirations here I mean the kind of aspirations that encompass the notion that every individual is responsible for the prosperity and stability of their respective nation or nations as well as the world (Long, 2009; Nowicka & Rovisco 2009). Roman firmly believes that individuals must work toward improving the lives of their immediate communities and the well-being of the global society. Therefore, by helping U.S. nationals gain a more positive outlook on Russian society through his informal activities, Roman's aim is not only to raise sympathies between Russian and the U.S. social communities but also to contribute to global stability. He stated:

This is a larger issue. Russia and American relations, they are more than just about Russia and America. Let's be clear. These two countries have a lot of influence around the world. It is basically about the world and how we will survive and how we will get along...I do this, I mean I want Americans to be friends with Russians not only for them but also for people in Afghanistan, in China, in Syria, in Ukraine, everywhere, the whole world. I think we all have that responsibility. That's my honest belief. We are all so connected, and it's not only politicians. They have a lot

of power, they make decisions, but we also matter and what we do everyday matters to us and people in other countries. I want peace between Russia, America, and other parts of the world. It is ambitious of me, but this is what I seriously believe. We are sick and tired of all these wars here and there. I know I may not look so amazing to some, but I also think that little by little, we kind of keep the angry tiger in the cage. I mean, what I do is a small thing that can help Russians and Americans not to go to war against each other and not to damage the world. At least that's what I hope for.

During the interview, Roman assured me that he would continue hosting small parties, bringing his U.S.-born and non-U.S. born friends together. His goal was to continue promoting a positive image of Russia in U.S. society, hoping that the hostilities between the two nations would soon begin to turn into an environment of collaboration. Roman, clearly, saw purpose in his efforts as he attempted to individually improve relations between Russian and American people.

5.3 Lera: "I Want to Unite People."

Lera is another immigrant who was driven to impact how U.S. nationals view Russia and Russian society. As I indicated in previous chapters, Lera is a professional in social development in her mid-forties. She came to the United States over fifteen years ago because she married a U.S. citizen. Political oppression in Russia has also factored into her decision to relocate to the United States. While immigration was a difficult decision for Lera, it was a significant event that she desired to improve her life.

In the previous chapter, I have also discussed that Lera was strongly affected by the deterioration of the U.S.-Russia political ties. She was and remains critical of Russia's annexation of Crimea and its attempts to influence the United States presidential election of 2016. Lera spoke out in support of U.S. sanctions against Russia, deeming them necessary measures to punish and to deter Russia's political circle from further attempts to interfere in Ukraine or the United States internal political processes. Lera's positions have severely damaged her relationships with some family members and friends in Russia who view her political positions as a form of betrayal of her homeland.

Scholars have illustrated that immigrant women often become socially active in their home and host communities when they encounter issues that damage their social and economic

well-being and limit their human rights (Zloniski, 2006). Lera has also decided to be more socially engaged in her home and host countries due to the rapid deterioration of the U.S.-Russia political ties. Specifically, feeling disappointed that the international political crisis has not only worsened her relationships with some of her connections in Russia but has also forced Russian and U.S. nationals to view each other as enemies, Lera has decided to find her own ways of attempting to improve relations between the two countries.

As Lera explained, to impact Russian nationals' views of U.S. society, she mainly resorts to daily dialogues with her family members and friends back in her home country. While holding these dialogues, Lera's focus is on convincing her interlocutors that ordinary U.S. nationals are regular people who desire to live healthy and secure lives. "I just tell people back home that Americans are not our enemies, they are in many ways similar to Russians and just like Russians they want to be happy, to have financial freedom, stay healthy, and just be happy," Lera shared with me to emphasize how she encourages her home community not to see U.S. nationals as distant and hostile opponents.

In the United States, Lera also holds dialogues to encourage U.S. nationals to view Russia as a country with a deep history and diverse culture. Additionally, during my time in the field, I found out that since the recent deterioration of U.S.-Russia ties, Lera has organized three different presentations about Russia in the U.S. middle-school that her children attend. By participating in these events, she combined being a supportive mother and also an active immigrant who wants to build peace between Russian and U.S. societies. Delivering these presentations, her goal was to challenge a monolithic portrayal of Russia as an enemy nation that has been consistently promoted by the political elites and media in the United States.

Lera organized these presentations on those days when the school hosted a celebration of different cultures from around the world. To help me grasp a better idea of her activities, she shared several photographs with me of the events at which she presented. Discussing these images with Lera, I found out that each year the school administration hosted the celebration of global cultures at a school's gymnasium. For the event, the gymnasium was decorated with flags representing different countries. Presenters were also given tables on which they could set up audio and visual aids, including souvenirs and food from the countries that they represented. The tables were arranged in a U-shaped pattern, allowing event attendees to freely walk around the gymnasium and listen to the presenters.

Thanks to these photographs, I also learned that Lera had a poster to better convey her story about Russian people to the U.S. audience. The poster was made of black poster board paper and had various images related to Russia glued to it. All the images that the visual aid included came either from Russian magazines or the Internet. The poster presented a particular vision of her home country. Specifically, the images that she chose for her presentation highlighted Russia's globally known figures and cultural impacts.

For instance, Lera's poster included biographical information and pictures of a Russian cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin (1934-1968), who is known as the first human in space. She also included images of the periodic table of elements that was arranged by a Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev in 1869, and that is used worldwide today. There were also numerous images of some of the most famous Russian writers, including Leo Tolstoi (1828-1910) and Nikolay Nekrasov (1821-1878), whose works are read far beyond Russian borders. To educate the U.S. audience about Russia's achievements in global arts and sports, Lera used images of a famous Russian ballet dancer, Anna Pavlova (1881-1931), and a currently famous hockey player, Alexander Ovechkin. One poster also included a picture and a background description of Sergey Brin, one of the founders of Google, who was born in Russia and immigrated to the United States as a child. In presenting these people to the wider U.S. audience, Lera's aim was to "show Americans that Russian people have done a lot of good things for the world. Russian people are not enemies."

To highlight the beauty of Russia's architecture, Lera's posters displayed numerous images of Russia's historic buildings, including the Kremlin and Saint Basil's Cathedral. Because these presentations were held in a U.S. school, Lera has also discussed the value of education in Russian society. To accompany her talk with visuals, Lera used several images and information about Russia's Day of Knowledge, September 1st, on her posters. September 1st is the day when academic school year begins for students in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning.

In Lera's view, contemporary U.S. society associates Russia and Russian people only with President Putin and the U.S. presidential election hacking- the only figure and the main political development that U.S. media has been consistently focusing on for the past several years. Her presentations are mechanisms through which she challenged a monolithic

representation of her home country and introduced a side of Russia that, as she put it, “is largely unknown or simply ignored here [in the United States].”

Lera’s work of representing Russian society and culture to U.S. nationals simultaneously benefits Russians and Americans. Russians benefit because Russian society is presented in a positive light, while U.S. nationals expand their understanding of the world. At the same time, these mechanisms are meant to bring the two nations closer. Lera commented:

I want to unite people. I think what I do helps Russians and Americans. You can't see the results right away, it's not a direct impact, but it is an impact. I think if Americans learn about Russia, they will respect this culture more and Russian people. And hopefully, they will stop thinking that Russia is only about Putin, and they will see that Russians did good things for the world. And I think it is good for Russians, right, if other people think positively about this nation. I think this is how my presentations are helpful...Even if it can seem like it's not a big deal, my presentations I mean, and it is a big deal for me.

It is highly important to Lera that Russia and the United States begin to build a relationship of trust, which can be partially achieved if U.S. society has a more favorable view of Russian people. Her desire to see Russian and U.S. societies establish a relationship of trust is also informed by her memories of growing up in Soviet Russia. Memories of the past influence how we see the world and our place within it; they influence our desires, our goals, and our actions in the present (Bergson, 1912/2007). Indeed, Lera highlighted that she remembers how her family struggled financially during the 1980s and the 1990s, the time when Russia was isolated economically from many other countries, including the United States. These memories fuel Lera’s convictions that Russia and the United States must cooperate in providing economic stability to their societies. “I don’t want to see Russia to be isolated again and to see Russian people struggle with poverty again. That’s why I try to do what I can to help and unite these countries,” Lera stated, providing more insight into the reasons behind her actions.

Lera intends to continue improving Russian and U.S. nationals’ perceptions of each other’s societies. It is a transnational responsibility that she is proud to fulfill. As Lera asserted, relations between Russian and U.S. societies will always be a concern for her as an immigrant with lives in both nations. In Lera’s own words:

I can’t write books and tell millions of Russians and Americans to be friends. I do something small. If everyone does small things, great things can happen, and our countries will learn to be friends. I will not stop doing what I can. These nations will always be important to me, no matter how I feel about them or how upset I am

with them. Every time I have a chance, I will tell Russians and Americans that we can't be enemies, we must not be enemies. We must work together as friends.

5.4 Concluding Points

Living between the two worlds, Russian immigrants recognize that they cannot let the tensions that have been growing in the U.S.-Russia relations since 2014 damage how ordinary Russians and Americans view each other's nations. Therefore, they utilize their transnational positions to discourage Russian and U.S. societies from seeing each other as enemy nations. In doing so, Russian immigrants resort to personal efforts, hoping to contribute to a transnational social change on an individual basis.

Informal everyday dialogues constitute the primary avenue through which Russian immigrants attempt to influence the consciousness of Russian and U.S. nationals. More specifically, Russian immigrants hold informal dialogues with members of their professional and personal communities situated transnationally to raise social awareness between the two nations. These dialogues focus on social issues of national and global levels that reveal similar economic and social hardships that both societies face. By revealing how the fates of Russian and the U.S. social communities are more similar than different, Russian immigrants not only humanize Russian and U.S. nationals but also motivate them to be more accepting of and sympathetic toward each other's everyday struggles.

Some immigrants like Roman and Lera, as this chapter illustrates, engage in informal activities to advance a favorable image of Russia in the United States. Although they organize these activities in their host country, they are meant to benefit both societies. U.S. nationals become more informed about Russian people, meanwhile, Russian society benefits because it is presented in a positive light in a country that considers today's Russia an adversary state.

Academic literature often discusses immigrants as individuals who move to other countries in search of better economic opportunities. Furthermore, immigrants are most often conceptualized as actors with human capital who significantly benefit national economies of sending and receiving states (Borjas, 2016; Legrain, 2014; Eckstein & Najam, 2013; Moloney, 2012). Russian professionals' accounts presented in this chapter serve as a reminder that it is also important to understand immigrants as actors who participate in international affairs and in raising sympathies between their home and host nations. While immigrants' informal efforts may

not be as visible and as wide-ranging as political acts such as collective protests, lobbying, or participation in political campaigns, they reveal what immigrant transnational engagement looks like in their daily experiences. Aspiring to a transnational peace and global stability, Russian immigrants not only navigate but also manage to develop strategies to respond to the political forces that sow divisions between Russian and U.S. national communities and disturb immigrants' transnational ways of life.

Finally, as immigrants reported, they intend to continue working toward raising sympathies between their homeland and hostland. They will continue to challenge political and media forces which create anti-Russian and anti-American sentiments among ordinary people of the two interconnected societies. They plan to do so not only for the benefit of today's nations of Russia and the United States but also for the future generations of both nations.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6.1 My Story

Whenever scholars explore a particular social issue or a phenomenon, they are often asked to provide academic reasons for their research inquiries. In this section, I would like to share the story that has impacted me personally and has also sparked my interest in understanding the lives of Russian immigrants between Russia and the United States in the context of U.S.-Russia ties deterioration.

In summer 2015, I went to Turkmenistan to visit my family whom I have not seen for three years. Once my vacation in Turkmenistan ended, I decided to return to the United States for my studies through Moscow, Russia. As a Russian citizen, I did not need a visa to fly to Russia from Turkmenistan. Moreover, a ticket from Moscow, Russia to New York City, and then to Indiana at that time was cheaper than flying to the United States through any other country. Before flying to New York, I decided to stay in Moscow for three days to visit my friends there. It was a great time as I had a lot of conversations with my Russian friends about my life and the life of others in U.S. society. My friends were also, of course, interested in knowing how the American media portrays Russia after the Russian government incorporated Crimea into its territory in 2014. They also all shared their opinions about the Crimean annexation and why they either supported or did not support Russia's actions in Ukraine. These types of honest and intellectual conversations always make me appreciate my friends throughout the world. I wanted to stay in Moscow for much longer, however, because I had to be back in time for my studies, I could not stay there for more than three days.

My flight to New York City was leaving from one of the largest Russian airports, Sheremetyevo. I arrived at the airport early enough to register for my flight, to check in my luggage, and to go through passport control check. I have traveled a lot for the past twenty years and have gone through many passport control checks in different countries. Passport control check officers typically examine traveler's passports and other documents that prove one's eligibility to fly abroad. To be completely honest, going through a passport control check was never a problematic experience for me. I understand that passport control officers' responsibility is to check the legality of a traveler's document so I always patiently wait for them

to check my passports and always answer their questions. I have never personally experienced any hostility toward me from the passport control officers until the summer of 2015 at Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow, Russia.

After I checked in my luggage for my flight to New York, I was directed to go through passport control. I joined the queue of about 10 people. I was excited that there were very few people in front of me, expecting this process to go smoothly. When it was my turn, I approached the booth where the officer was waiting for me with my Turkmen and Russian passports and my I-20 ready in my hands. It was a female officer. I greeted her and she instantly asked me to hand her my Russian passport. I followed her request. She began going through my passport and asking questions. “Where are you going?” she first asked me. I told her that I was traveling to New York City and then going to Indiana. “What is the purpose of your trip?” she followed up with another question. I expected this question and without hesitation I explained that I’m pursuing a Ph.D. program at a university in the state of Indiana. “Who is paying for your education?” she asked me while still looking at my Russian passport. I explained that I have a tuition waiver at Purdue University because I work as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. She asked me again: “Who is paying for your education?” I assumed that my first response was clear enough and was a little surprised when she asked me the same question again. To respond, I repeated myself and said that I have a tuition waiver at Purdue University because I work for the university. “An American university is paying for you?” she continued in a very abrasive tone. This time she lifted her head to look at me. I could tell she was unhappy with my previous answers. I stopped smiling instantly. I looked at her and calmly responded that Purdue University is not paying *for* me. It is paying me as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and that I receive a tuition waiver as a benefit. The officer kept insisting that Purdue University is, in fact, paying for my education. She was convinced that Purdue University is paying me and *for* me. “An American university is paying for a Russian citizen? Why is that? Can you explain?” the officer asked me. Several different thoughts crossed my mind at that moment. But mostly, I was afraid that the officer would not allow me to leave the country. I then said: “I am a Ph.D. student and I work for that university. I am not sure what else to tell you.” “You need to tell me why an American university is paying for a Russian citizen?” the officer responded to my statements. I collected my thoughts and replied, “Because I applied to a graduate program in that university and was selected by professors to study there. Also, I study there as a student from Turkmenistan, not

Russia. I just wanted to clarify that". I told her that I was studying as a student from Turkmenistan at Purdue, hoping she would be less concerned about my status and my studies. I then told her that I could show her my Turkmen passport with a U.S. visa in it, if she wanted to see it. At this moment I handed her my Turkmen passport. The officer said: "I don't care about your Turkmen passport. You are a Russian citizen who studies in America and the American university is paying for you and it is not clear to me why they are paying for you." I felt powerless. I did not know how to respond. I felt dehumanized thinking that my Turkmen identity, a source of my strength, has absolutely no value for this female officer. Even my Russian citizenship did not protect me. In fact, my Russian citizenship and my status as a Ph.D. student who attends a U.S. university were used against me. I then collected my thoughts and said, "I have already explained everything, and I am not even sure why you are asking me these questions. Are there issues with my passport? Why am I being asked these questions? Can you please explain?" The officer ignored me and picked up her phone to make a call. I don't know whom she called, but the person picked up the phone and the officer began talking to them about me. She said: "I have this young woman. She is a Russian citizen, but she studies in an American university and they are paying for her education." Although I wanted to correct the officer, I did not intervene and patiently waited for her to end the conversation. I did not hear what the person on the other side was telling the officer, but I remember the officer asking them: "Are you sure about that? Is that what you want me to do? Ok, well, if you are sure."

I was scared. I was scared that the officer would stop me and not let me get on my flight and that I would not be able to do anything about it. All I could do at that moment is wait. The officer then hung up the phone. She picked up my Russian passport again and stamped it. She handed it to me and said, "You can go." I was very confused, so I asked to specify what she meant. She said, "You can go to your gate". I took my passport, thanked the officer, and went straight to my gate. I was walking so fast, I felt like I was running. I did not want to think about what just happened to me. I just walked to my gate and did not look back. Once I reached my gate, I sat down. I felt that my heart was beating rapidly and that I was still very anxious. My hands were shaking. I decided to cross my arms to help myself calm down.

As I was sitting in my chair, I gradually began processing what just happened. I could not help but think that this situation took place because of the deterioration of the U.S.-Russian political ties over the conflict in Ukraine and Russia's annexation of Crimea. I was convinced

that I was perceived and treated with suspicion by the officer because of the hostile environment between the two countries. I wanted to call my friends in Russia and tell them what happened. I then changed my mind because I was not sure if my call would be tracked by Russian authorities. I realized that I was thinking through fear. I made no phone calls and sat in my chair, waiting impatiently for boarding.

The boarding process began after about one hour. When I got into my seat on the plane, I just closed my eyes. I felt that I was no longer as anxious, but I still did not feel fully calm. I was still thinking that someone could come after me and tell me that I cannot return to the United States. It is only about one hour into the flight that I fully calmed down, realizing that I have a chance to finish my education at Purdue.

I often think about what happened to me at the Sheremetyevo airport. It reminds me of how connected we all are to international relations, even when we do not feel their presence in our lives. At the same time, the experience in the summer of 2015 was also one of the reasons that I decided to explore the lives of Russian immigrants between Russia and the United States in the context of the U.S.-Russia political crisis. My goal was to understand why Russian immigrants have decided to move to the United States? What type of connections do they maintain to Russia? What do they think about their lives between Russia and the United States? How have they been impacted by the deterioration of U.S.-Russia ties since 2014? How have they attempted to impact U.S.-Russia relations?

6.2 Russian Immigrants and Transnationalism

Because my goal was to understand Russian immigrants' lives between their home and host countries, I used an analytical framework of transnationalism to guide my academic inquiry. Transnationalism, as Ayse Çağlar (2001) writes, is an "optic which makes visible the increasing intensity and scope of circular flows of persons, goods, information, and symbols triggered by international labor migration" (p. 607). It is also a phenomenon that reveals immigrants' capacities and desires to live in two or more countries simultaneously (Vertovec, 2001). In transnational migration, it is specifically immigrants who emerge as significant actors who build and maintain transnational connections between their sending and receiving societies. Transnational connections include a variety of economic, political, and socio-cultural processes and activities. As scholars emphasize, transnational immigrants send remittances to their families

and run businesses in their communities of origin while also contribute to a national economy of a host society by participating in its labor market. Immigrants also often support and take part in religious and other cultural institutions in their sending and receiving countries. Cross-border political participation is another significant characteristic of immigrants' transnational form of life. Many immigrants consistently vote and run for political offices back in their home countries while also actively engage in the political life of an adaptive nation-state (Levitt, 2001; Salih, 2003; Tarrow, 2005; Colic-Piesker, 2008; Kane, 2011; Francisco-Menchavez, 2018).

Looking at Russian immigrants' experiences through the framework of transnationalism has allowed me to explore not only why Russian immigrants decided to relocate and settle in another country, but also why they remain connected to their homeland. As my work illustrates, all study participants came to the United States for a variety of reasons. These include not only a search for better economic opportunities and professional gains but also a desire to gain more political liberties and rights.

Regardless of the reasons for immigration, Russian professionals continue to remain connected to their homeland. These connections are a significant part of immigrants' daily lives. The most significant ties that Russian immigrants maintain are their ties to families and friends in their homeland. These connections allow immigrants to meet their social obligations to families and friends whom Russian immigrants support financially and emotionally. At the same time, these transnational relationships provide immigrants with a sense of emotional support that Russian professionals need as they face the challenges of settlement in the United States. Following political, social, and economic developments in Russia are also a part of Russian immigrants' transnationalism. As members of a Russian national community, Russian professionals deem it is significant to stay informed on various political, social, and economic processes that take place in the life of their home country daily.

At the same time, as I have illustrated in this dissertation, we gain a more nuanced perspective on Russian immigrants' transnational lives by looking at them in the context of U.S.-Russia relations, which have been rapidly deteriorating since March 2014. Relations between Moscow and Washington, as I explain in chapter 2, have been growing with tensions for over five years. In 2014, the United States condemned Russia's attacks on Ukrainian sovereignty, imposing sanctions that weakened Russia's economy. The Russian government, however, claimed that the people of Crimea willingly joined the territory of the Russian Federation, after

voting to leave the Ukrainian territory in a Crimean status referendum. In 2016, the Obama administration expanded its sanctions against Russia, accusing the Russian government of attempting to undermine U.S. democracy by interference with the U.S. presidential election. Russian authorities have denied making any attempts to meddle in the U.S. domestic affairs, referring to Washington's allegations as false and baseless.

Such rapid deterioration of U.S.-Russia political ties and the hostile environment that emerged between the two nations have shaped not only Russian immigrants' perceptions of Russia and the United States but also how they identify with these nation-states. The accounts in this study reveal a range of immigrants' political opinions and experiences. Some immigrants support Russia's position concerning Ukraine and question U.S. government's accusations that Russia's government meddled in the U.S. presidential election in 2016. Their political views have been met with hostilities in U.S. society. Experiencing a sense of exclusion in the United States in the context of U.S.-Russia political clash, these immigrants have come to recognize a stronger sense of identity with Russia. Other immigrants, however, support U.S. policies toward Russia and its global political behavior. These immigrants have shared that their political opinions have been perceived as a form of national betrayal by their families and friends in the homeland. Recognizing their distance from Russian society due to their political views in the context of U.S.-Russia political tensions, these immigrants claim to have a stronger sense of attachment to the United States. There are also those immigrants who are critical of the global behavior of Russia and the United States. They argue that both countries play on their imperialistic ambitions and seek to dominate and dictate the world order. These immigrants' political views situate them as outsiders in both nation-states, thus they lack a sense of attachment both to their home and host societies. What the narratives presented in this dissertation illustrate is that the deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations creates a context in which Russian immigrants do not develop a transnational identity, which is a sense of simultaneous belonging to Russia and the United States.

Exploring the nexus between transnationalism and international relations, I also pay attention to how Russian immigrants counter the hostile political environment that emerged between Russia and the United States. Specifically, I show that Russian professionals utilize transnational dialogues with their home and host communities to incite a greater sympathy and cross-cultural understanding between the two nations. Some immigrants also organize small-

scale activities in the United States to encourage members of the host community to appreciate Russian society and culture. The goal that Russian immigrants ultimately seek to achieve is to discourage both Russian and U.S. nationals from viewing each other as enemy nations.

One of the main limitations of this study is the small sample size of the study participants. However, as I have mentioned previously, in conducting this study, my goal was not to quantify what it means to be a Russian transnational immigrant but to gain a more nuanced understanding of what transnationalism looks like for individual lives. Russian immigrants' experiences in the context of U.S.-Russia relations expand our understanding of transnationalism as a socio-cultural phenomenon. While much research on transnational immigration explores what kind of connections immigrants maintain to their countries of origin and why they are significant to immigrant groups, this dissertation shows that it is also necessary to recognize transnationalism as a dynamic and constantly changing phenomenon. Transnational lifestyles not only enhance global interconnections throughout the world but are also shaped by various global processes. What this study ultimately showcases is that in exploring transnationalism, it is necessary to not only focus on the kind of ties that immigrants maintain to their host and home societies and why these ties are important to them but to also recognize that immigrants' cross-border connections, identities, and responsibilities as transnational subjects are continuously changing when their transnational forms of life interact with global forces, such as international relations between immigrants' countries of origin and destination.

6.3 Developments in U.S.-Russia Relations: Summer 2019- Spring 2020

International relations are always changing, too. New developments frequently emerge between the nation-states which alter the trajectory of international political ties. This is also true for Russia and the United States.

Since 2016, the Russian government has been accused by Washington's leadership of trying to damage U.S. democracy and U.S. society through its efforts to meddle in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. In the summer of 2019, U.S. federal authorities began claiming that Russia will also attempt to influence presidential election in the United States in 2020 (Chiacu, 2019). On February 13, 2020, U.S. intelligence officials briefed the House Intelligence Committee and warned that Russia is continuing to meddle in the 2020 U.S. presidential election to help President Donald Trump get re-elected (Miller, 2020). In response to the warnings, U.S.

representatives of the Democratic Party called for more sanctions against the Russian government (Touchberry, 2020). While no specific sanctions were introduced over Russia's election interference attempts, on February 24, 2020, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), imposed new restrictions on trade with Russia related to products of technological and military use. BIS also removed Russia from more favorable Country Groups A:2 and A:4 to Country Groups of Concern-D:2. ("Department", 2020).

The Russian government, in its turn, has been consistently denying any attempts of interference in the domestic politics of any foreign country. For example, during the international forum "Russia Energy week 2019," which was held in Moscow, Russia in October 2019, Kier Simmons, a correspondent from NBC, asked President Putin if Moscow had plans to impact the course of the U.S. presidential election in 2020. Without hesitation, Putin denied any plans or any wish of doing so. He emphasized that Russia is more concerned with issues that impact Russian society. Putin said:

You know, we have enough of our problems. We work on solving our internal problems and that's our main goal. We are not concerned about the kind of election that they will have. We will be glad to work with any partner, with any president that will be elected by the American people ("Putin," 2019).

Washington's accusations continued to worsen bilateral relations between the two countries. However, in March 2020, U.S.-Russia relations took a different turn due to the COVID-19 ongoing pandemic. COVID-19 refers to the disease caused by a novel coronavirus (Meng, Hua, & Bian, 2020). As experts point out, COVID-19 leads to pneumonia and long-term lung damage (Casella, Rajnik, Cuomo, Dulebohn, & Di Napoli, 2020). This disease was first observed in Wuhan, China in late 2019. By March 2020, over 200 countries, including Russia and the United States, were affected by this highly contagious COVID-19 coronavirus (Chan, Kok, Zhu, Chu, To, Yuan, & Yeun, 2020).

On March 13, 2020, Trump declared a state of national emergency in the United States over the pandemic (Savage, 2020). Most U.S. states introduced social distancing and shelter-in-place orders to slow down the rapidly growing disease that resulted in over 215,000 coronavirus cases, with more than 5,000 deaths by April 1st, 2020 (Bacon, Reyes & Ortiz, 2020). Moreover, U.S. educational institutions of all levels moved classes online and non-essential businesses

closed in most states to protect American nationals from the highly infectious virus (Perrett, 2020; Schumaker, 2020).

By late March, the Russian government also introduced a regime of self-isolation in Russia as the country began to battle more cases of COVID-19 across the nation (Muhametshina, 2020). Just like in the United States, Russian schools, colleges, and universities canceled face-to-face classes and moved to distance learning (Vasilyeva, Mishina, Chernyh, & Lamova, 2020). Furthermore, the Russian government ordered all non-essential businesses to diminish the spread of coronavirus among Russian nationals (Kozlovskii, 2020).

Curiously enough, but as Russia began to battle the spread of COVID-19 with more intense measures, it has also decided to assist the United States' efforts against the pandemic. Specifically, on March 31st, 2020 the Russian government sent an airplane to the United States with humanitarian aid in the form of medical supplies, including ventilators, respirators, and masks for U.S. medical workers. As news media reported, Trump accepted this offer from Putin after a phone conversation that the two leaders held about the COVID-19 pandemic (Osborn, Devitt, & Holland, 2020).

Some U.S. media outlets questioned the real intentions behind the Russian government's humanitarian move. Russia's efforts were represented as a form of Russian propaganda and an attempt to challenge the standing of the United States as a strong global actor (Gaouette, N. & Cohen, 2020). Russian public figures, however, pushed forward the idea that the two nations need to closely cooperate in their fight against the global spread of COVID-19. They also expressed their hope that the pandemic may lead to a significant improvement of U.S.-Russia relations (Brennan, 2020; Dmitriev, 2020; Yeung, 2020).

The global pandemic and how it unfolds both in Russia and the United States have also been impacting Russian immigrants. Many immigrants are extremely concerned that the global pandemic is devastating public health and national economies of both Russia and the United States. At the same time, they are hopeful that the new crisis will, indeed, lead to closer collaboration and stronger ties between the political elites and the ordinary people of both nations.

6.4 Future Research

The changes that the COVID-19 pandemic begins to introduce in U.S.-Russia relations and how Russian immigrants react to them provide me with several research ideas that I plan to continue in the future. The first research focus is concerned with the impact of the global pandemic on the Russian immigrant community in the United States and their ties to their home country. Specifically, I will explore how the global pandemic has impacted Russian immigrants' transnational social relations and identities concerning both Russia and the United States. Steven Vertovec (2001) suggests that to get a more complex understanding of transnationalism, it is important to explore how transnational connections change with time and to what extent current forms of transnationalism are similar to or differ from earlier transnational ties. In line with this suggestion, I am curious to understand if the global pandemic will lead to an emergence of new transnational connections and identities and how these connections and identities can alter Russian immigrants' lives.

My second research study will explore how global pandemic impacts U.S.-Russia relations. My goal is to investigate if the pandemic leads to any significant changes in the U.S.-Russia partnership. If changes in U.S.-Russia relations emerge, I will then also explore how Russian immigrants react to and engage with new political development between their home and host societies.

One of the limitations that I recognize in my current dissertation concerns immigrants' socio-economic status. More specifically, my dissertation focused primarily on immigrant groups who come from middle class or upper-middle-class backgrounds. Although this professional cohort provides significant insights into the transnational lives of immigrants from more fortunate economic groups, there is also a need to understand how immigrants from lower socio-economic classes build their transnational lives. Class differences can significantly expand our understanding of transnationalism and how this process is lived in turbulent times of international conflicts or global health crises.

My desire to continue studying immigrant communities in the United States is shaped by my firm convictions that immigrant stories matter. I believe that my new research projects will deepen our understanding of transnationalism and the people who embody this socio-cultural phenomenon. No matter where they are, immigrants continually contribute to the societies in

which they live in various ways. Therefore, their stories deserve to be told and their lives deserve to be recognized.

APPENDIX A. PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Pseudonym	Gender	Occupation and age	Immigration Year
Asya	Female	Foreign language teacher in her mid-forties.	2007
Dina	Female	Assistant in the information technology (IT) business in her late thirties.	2008
Emma	Female	Senior expert in the information technology (IT) sector in her late forties.	2000
Inna	Female	Physical therapist in her early fifties.	Early 1990s
Irina	Female	Research scientist in her late forties.	2000
Kera	Female	Communication specialist in the financial sector in her early forties.	2008
Lada	Female	Financial support specialist in her late forties.	2010
Lera	Female	Social development professional in her mid-forties.	Late 1990s
Mila	Female	Marketing manager in her late thirties.	2006
Yana	Female	Sales specialist in the non-profit sector in her early thirties.	2013
Akim	Male	Culinary assistant in his mid-thirties.	2013
Denis	Male	Financial investment professional in his late thirties.	2000
Feliks	Male	Financial coordinator in his late forties.	2006
Lev	Male	A graphic designer in his early forties.	2009
Max	Male	Business analyst in his early thirties.	2013
Nick	Male	Restaurant business assistant/non-profit management specialist in his mid-thirties.	2013
Roman	Male	Restaurant executive director in his mid-forties.	Early 1990s
Vadim	Male	International development expert in his mid-thirties.	2012
Yura	Male	Senior specialist in the information technology (IT) sector in his mid-fifties.	1997
Zahar	Male	Software engineer in his late thirties.	2005

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participant Information

1. Interview date and location
2. Age
3. Sex
4. Socioeconomic status
5. Place of birth, (hometown/region)
6. Current location of residence
7. Occupation

I. *Adjusting to life in the US.*

1. When did you come to the U.S.?
2. Why did you decide to come to the U.S.?
3. Why did you choose to live in this city?
4. Was it difficult to adjust in the U.S.?
5. Tell me about your life in the U.S. (professional and personal).
6. What personal and professional challenges do you face in the U.S.?
7. What personal and professional opportunities do you think you have in the U.S.?
8. How do you feel about living in the U.S.?

II. *Ties to Russia*

9. Where are you from in Russia?
10. Why did you decide to leave Russia?
11. Do you have family in Russia?
12. Do you have friends?
13. How often do you communicate with them?
14. Why is it important for you to stay in touch with them?
15. How often do you go back to Russia? Where?
16. What other ties to Russia do you have?
17. Why are these ties important to you?

III. *U.S.-Russia Relations*

18. What do you know about the history of U.S.-Russia relations?
19. What do you think about the Ukrainian Crisis?
20. What do you think about Russia's annexation of Crimea?
21. What do you think is the role of the U.S. in this crisis?
22. Are you following what is happening between two countries?
23. How have recent developments in U.S.-Russia relations impacted you?
24. How have recent developments in U.S.-Russia relations impacted your life in the U.S.?
25. How have recent developments in U.S.-Russia relations impacted your life in Russia?

26. Can you provide specific examples?
27. What is the future for U.S.-Russia relations, in your opinion?
28. Do you participate in any activities that focus on U.S.-Russia relations?
29. Have you organized any activities in Russia or the U.S. about these two states and their relations?
30. Why is it important for you to organize or participate in such events?
31. What did you hope to achieve by participating in such events?
32. Are there any events in Russia and the U.S. that you hope to attend or organize soon?

APPENDIX C. POLITICAL INTERVIEWS AND STATEMENTS

Interviews and statements by President Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin on the Ukrainian Crisis and Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

President Barack Obama's Interviews and Statements

Yeltsov, I. (2015, February 3). *Fareed Zakaria Obama CNN Interview* [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Duu6IwW3sbw>.

NPR. (2016, December 16). *Obama on Russian hacking: 'We need to take action. And we will'* | *Morning Edition* / NPR [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5Z1WN_aaRw

Obama, B. (2014, April 17). Obama warns of “consequences” for Russian actions destabilizing Ukraine. (Garrett, M. Interviewer) [Video File]. *CBSNEWS*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/obama-warns-russia-of-consequences-for-action-in-ukraine/>

Obama, B. (2014, August 2). The president on dealing with Russia (The Economist, Interviewer). *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2014/08/economist-interviews-barack-obama-2>

Obama, B. (2015, October 11). Full Interview: President Obama on ISIS, Putin, Trump on “60 Minutes.” (Kroft, S., Interviewer). *RealClear Politics*. Retrieved from http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2015/10/11/full_interview_president_obama_on_isis_put_in_trump_on_60_minutes.html

RT. (2015, September 28). “*US cannot solve world's problems alone: Obama addresses UNGA (FULL SPEECH)*” [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6oxByE_IeU

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary (2014, March 20). *Statement by the President on Ukraine* [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/20/statement-president-ukraine>

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary (2016, December 29). *Statement by the President on actions in response to Russian malicious cyber activity and harassment* [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/29/statement-president-actions-response-russian-malicious-cyber-activity>

President Vladimir Putin's Interviews and Statements

Address by President of the Russian Federation. (2014, March 18). President of Russia. Retrieved from <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

President of the Russian Federation. (2018, March 10). Interview to American TV channel NBC. Retrieved from <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57027>

President Rossii. (2014, October 24). *Vystuplenie Putina na "Valdai" (24.10.2014)*. [Putin's speech in "Valdai"] [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGtYEwm-22Q&ab_channel=RT%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BC

Putin, V. (2015, September 27). *All eyes on Putin*. (C. Rose, Interviewer). Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/vladimir-putin-russian-president-60-minutes-charlie-rose/>

Putin, V. (2018, July 17). Vladimir Putin otvetil na voprosy zhurnalista, vedushego telekanal Fox News Krisa Yollesa. Zapis interv'yu sostoyalas 16 go iyulya v Helsinki (Finlyandiya) [Vladimir Putin answered Fox News host Chris Wallace's questions. The interview was recorded on July 16 in Helsinki (Finland)]. Kremlin. Retrieved from <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58019>

Putin, V. (2015, September 28). Polnyi tekst I video vystupleniya Vladimira Putin na Generalnoi Assamblee OON. [Full text and video of Putin's UN General Assembly speech]. *RT na Russkom*. Retrieved from <https://russian.rt.com/article/119712>

APPENDIX D. MEDIA DATA I

Questions for Media Data Analysis:

1. What did Russian politicians and media figures say about the Ukrainian crisis and Russian interference in the U.S. election in 2016?
2. How did they describe/represent Russia's annexation of Crimea?
3. What were their responses to U.S. accusations of Russian interference in the U.S. election in 2016?
4. How did they depict the United States and its role in the Ukrainian crisis and the U.S. election in 2016?
5. What specific words (nouns and adjectives) did they use to describe the United States?
6. What words and phrases did they use to describe U.S. attitudes toward Russia?
7. What were their suggestions about what the United States should do or what should be done to the United States?
8. What approaches did they offer to solve political issues between Russia and the United States?
9. What did U.S. politicians and media figures say about the Ukrainian crisis and Russian interference in the U.S. election in 2016?
10. How did they talk about Russia and its role in the Ukrainian crisis and the U.S. election in 2016?
11. What specific words (nouns and adjectives) did they use to describe Russia?
12. What words and phrases did they use to describe Russian attitudes toward the United States?
13. What were their suggestions about what Russia should do or what should be done to Russia?
14. What approaches did they offer to solve political issues between Russia and the United States?

List of news articles and televised news and analytical shows about the Ukrainian crisis and the Crimean referendum examined.

News Articles

Publication Date	Headline	Paper
02/22/2014	Amerikanskie strasti po Putinu. Politolog Andranik Migranyan-o tom, kak v SSHA otsenivayut figure rossiiskogo prezidenta [American obsession with Putin. Political scientist Andranik Migranyan discusses how the United States assess Russian president].	Izvestia
02/28/2014	Ukrainskaya golovolomka. Politolog Andranik Migranya- o tom, pochemu Rossiya ne mozhet ostat' tsa ravnodushnoi k tomu, chto proishodit na territorii ee blizhaishego sosedu [Ukrainian conundrum. Political scientist Andranik Migranyan discusses why Russia cannot stay indifferent to what is happening on the territory of the closest neighbor].	Izvestia
03/07/2014	Pokazat silu, chtoby ee ne primenyat. Politik Konstantin Zatulin – o problemah i riskah razdeleniya Kryma i Ukrainy [To show power to not use it. A politician Konstantin Zatulin discusses problems and risks of division of Crimea and Ukraine].	Izvestia
03/11/2014	Ekonomicheskaya svoboda protiv torgovoi blokady. Pisatel Dmitrii Drobnitskii-o neobходимosti bolshoi strategii v usloviyah holodnoi voyny [Economic freedom against trade blockade. The writer Dmitrii Dornitskii discusses the need of big strategy during cold war].	Izvestia
03/13/2014	Krym-kak nacionalnaya ideya. [Crimea as a national idea]	Izvestia
03/15/2014	“Takoi zhutkoi rusofobii, kak seichas na Zapade, nikogda ne bylo”. [“There has never been such terrible Russophobia in the West as now.”]	Izvestia
03/16/2014	Rodina, my vernulis! Zhurnalist Natalya Gavrileva – o tom, chto chuvstvuut seichas lyudi v Simferopole [Motherland, we’ve returned! Journalist Natalya Gavrileva discusses what people are feeling right now in Simferopol].	Izvestia
03/17/2014	“Ya otstaivala i budu otstaivat nacionalnye interesy Rossii” [“I have and will continue to defend Russia’s national interests”].	Izvestia

03/17/2014	Krym-eto Rossiya: svoih ne brosil! [Crimea is Russia: we didn't leave ours!"].	Izvestia
03/18/2014	Vladimir Putin: "Pochemu v Kosovo mozjno, a v Krymy-nelzya?" Prezident prizval Zapad otoiti ot dvoinyh standartov pri ocenke krymskogo referendum [Vladimir Putin: "Why it was allowed in Kosovo but not in Crimea?" President has called upon the West to move away from double standards when evaluating the Crimean referendum].	Izvestia
03/18/2014	"My vmeste!" Na mitinge-koncerte na Krasnoi plosadi glava Gossoveta Kryma poblagodaryl Vladimira Putin za muzhestvo, a deputat Gosdumy Valerii Trapeznikov-zhitelei Kryma za nokaut maidany i Obame. ["We are together!" During the meeting-concert on the Red Square the chairman of the State council of Crimea thanked Vladimir Putin for bravery, and the deputy of State Duma Valerii Trapeznikov-residents of Crimea for knock out to maidan and Obama].	Izvestia
03/19/2014	Rossiya vozvrashayetsya v istoriyu [Russia returns to history].	Izvestia
04/14/2014	"Glava imperatoskogo doma: Obviniteli ishut sorinku v glazu Rossii." ["The head of the imperial house: Accusers are looking for a speck in Russia's eye."]	Izvestia
04/15/2014	Mazohizm ne dlya sverhderzhav. Politolog Dmitrii Saims o tom, kak Rossiya i Zapad mogli by izbezhat vozvrasheniya k sostoyaniyu holodnoi voyny [Masochism is not for superpowers. A political scientist Dmitrii Saims discusses how Russia and the West could avoid returning to the conditions of cold war].	Izvestia
07/18/2014	Hronika shiroko obyavlennoi provokacii. Zhurnalist Maksim Kononenko – o tom, chto izvestno, a chto neponyatno v istorii so sbitym malaziiskim lainerom [The chronicle of the widely announced provocation. Journalist Maksim Kononeko discusses what is known and what is not clear in the story of the downed Malaysian airline].	Izvestia
07/18/2014	MID: "Rossiya nastaivaet na otkrytom rassledovanii katastrofy Boeing". Moskva vyrazhaet neobhodimost nezavisimogo rassledovaniya traedii [MFA: "Russia insists on transpiration investigation of Beogin catastrophy." Moscow expresses the need of independent investigation of tragedy].	Izvestia
07/21/2014	Rogozin: "Vyvody o katastrofe Boeing dolzhny byt posle sledstviya". Vice-premyer solidaren s prezidentom Rossii, chto	Izvestia

	prichinoi tragedii stali voyenny deistviya [Rogozin: “Conclusions about the Boeing catastrophy should be drawn after inspection”. Vice prime minister is in solidarity with the Russian president that the cause of the tragedy were military actions].	
07/22/2014	Boeing 666. Pisatel Aleksandr Prohanov- o tom, kto na samom dele mozhet stoyat za gibelyu samoleta i k chemu eto mozhet privesti [Boeing 666. A writer Aleksandr Prohanov discusses who, in reality, can be behind the downing of the plane and what it can lead to].	Izvestia
07/23/2014	Depardye prizvali pomoch Rosii v informacionnoi voine s Zapadom. Frakciya LDPR planiruyet privlech aktera k obyasnieniyu evropeicam rossiiskoi pozicii po sobytiyam na Ukraine [Depardye was asked to help Russia in the informational war with the West. LDPR party is planning to invite the actor to explain to Europeans the Russian position on the situation in Ukraine].	Izvestia
07/29/14	Bitva za Ukrainu kak etap v bor’be za novyi miroporyadok. Politolog Andranik Migranyan – o tom, pochemu stavka bitvy za Ukrainu samo sushestvovanie Rossii kak derzhavy [The struggle for Ukraine as a phase in the fight for a new world order. Political scientist Andranik Migranyan discusses why the struggle for Ukraine is a form of existence of Russia as a superpower].	Izvestia
08/12/14	Pisatel Platon Besedin-ob oficialnom predstavitele Gosdepa SSHA kak svoeobraznom piar-proekte [A writer Platon Besedin discusses the official representative of U.S. Department of State as about a particular PR-project].	Izvestia
03/01/14	RF spokojno otvetila na urgozy prezidenta SSHA [RF has calmly responded to the US president’s threats].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
03/06/14	Korotkaya telegramma: “Ne nadorvites”. Demokratiya -eto volya sobstvennogo nardoa, a ne zarubezhnyh specslozh. [Short telegram: “Don’t rupture yourself”. Democracy is a will of the people, not of foreign agents].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
03/13/14	Krymskii val. Rossiya gotova priiti na pomosh sosedyam [Crimean arbor. Russia is ready to help a neighbor].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
03/13/14	Zabud’te pro “Holodnuu voinu”. Eks-sovetnik Dzhordzh Busha-mladshego Tomas Grem o geopoliticheskoy sopernichestve Rossii i SSHA na Ukraine [Forget about the “Cold war. Former	Rossiyskaya Gazeta

	advisor to George Bush junior, Thomas Grem, discusses the geopolitical competition Russia and the US in Ukraine].	
03/21/14	Spravedlivost prezhde vsego. Sovfed odobril vhozhdeniye Kryma i Sevastopolya v sostav Rossii [Justice above everything. Federation Union has approved Crimea's and Sevastopol's integration into Russia].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
03/25/14	V Krym-s lyubovyu. Pasporta vydadut v trehmesyachnyi srok [To Crimea with love. Passports will be issued in three months period].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
04/02/14	V SSHA prinyat zakon o pomoshi Ukraine i sanksiyah protiv RF [The U.S. has adopted a law concerning help to Ukraine and sanctions against RF].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
04/17/14	Putin prizval SSHA uiti ot politiki vran'ya i dvoinyh standartov [Putin has asked the U.S. to move away from the politics of double standards].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
04/24/2014	MID: Rossiya nadeetsya, chto SSHA prekratyat nadumannye insinuacii [MFA: Russia hopes that the US will stop imagined insinuations].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
05/21/14	Amerikancy v Krymu. Mnogie amerikanskije chastnye kompanii ne otkazhutsya ot raboty v Krymu [Americans in Crimea. Many American private companies do not refuse working in Crimea].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
06/20/14	Krizis mezhdunarodnogo prava: sovmennyy kontekst [The crisis of international law: contemporary context].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
08/01/14	Eksperty tak i ne dobralis do mesta krusheniya Boeing [Experts never made it to the place of Boeing downing].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
08/18/14	Otchet o prichinakh krusheniya Boeign na Ukraine obnarodyut v konce avgusta [Report about the causes of Boeign's collapse in Ukraine will be disclosed at the end of August].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
03/02/14	"Russia's aggression"	N.Y. Times
03/15/14	Foes of America in Russia crave rupture in ties.	N.Y. Times
03/17/14	Putin recognizes Crimea secession, defying the West.	N.Y. Times
03/19/14	How to punish Putin.	N.Y. Times
03/23/14	Confronting Putin's Russia.	N.Y. Times
03/24/14	Russia is ousted from group of 8 by U.S. and allies	N.Y. Times

03/26/14	Crimea and punishment	N.Y. Times
04/06/14	Putin's czarist folly	N.Y. Times
04/15/14	Russia is quick to bend truth about Ukraine	N.Y. Times
07/17/14	Jetliner explodes over Ukraine: Struck by missile, officials say	N.Y. Times
07/18/14	U.S. sees evidence of Russian links to jet's downing	N.Y. Times
07/18/14	Putin's Deadly Doctrine	N.Y. Times
08/06/14	To beat Putin, support Ukraine	N.Y. Times
08/07/14	Russia sanctions itself	N.Y. Times
08/10/14	Intervening in our name	N.Y. Times
03/03/14	Zbigniew Brzezinski: After Putin's aggression in Ukraine, the West must be ready to respond	Wash.Post
03/20/14	Anne Applebaum: A need to contain Russia	Wash.Post
03/20/14	The U.S. should keep tightening the sanctions on Russia	Wash.Post
03/21/14	Ukraine foreign minister the world must reject Russia's 'anschluss' in Crimea	Wash.Post
03/21/14	Russia celebrates Crimea annexation while Ukraine looks to West for support	Wash.Post
03/25/14	David Ignatus: Putin's actions in Crimea alter how the world will deal with him	Wash.Post
03/26/14	George F. Will: Can NATO restrain Russia?	Wash.Post
03/26/14	In Ukraine's lost Crimean Peninsula signs of Russian control increase at street level	Wash.Post
03/26/14	Obama urges Europeans to bolster NATO to help deter an expansionist Russia	Wash.Post
03/27/14	The U.S. strategy for keeping Ukraine safe from Russian aggression	Wash.Post
03/28/14	Anne Applebaum: Russia's anti-Western ideology has global consequences	Wash.Post
07/18/14	The Malaysia airline crash is the end of Russia's fairy tale	Wash.Post

07/20/14	In court of public opinion, Putin goes on trial	Wash.Post
07/21/14	The downside of giving weapons to rebels in Ukraine or Syria	Wash.Post
08/29/14	Russia, eastern Ukraine, and the morality of secession	Wash. Post
02/12/15	Russia should be prosecuted for its crimes against humanity	Wash. Post

Televised news and analytical shows.

Retrieved from Pervyi Kanal, Russia 1, and Internet Archive and YouTube platforms.

Air Date	Show Name	TV channel
03/16/14	Politika: Vypusk ot 16.03.2014 [Politics: Episode from 16.03.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
03/19/14	Politika. Vypusk ot 19.03.2014 [Politics: Episode from 19.03.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
03/20/14	Politika. Vypusk ot 20.03.2014 [Politics. Episode from 20.03.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
03/26/14	Politika. Vypusk ot 26.03.2014 [Politics. Episode from 26.03.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
04/02/14	Politika. Vypusk ot 02.04.2014 [Politics. Episode from 02.04.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
04/09/14	Politika. Vypusk ot 09.04.2014 [Politics. Episode from 09.04.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
04/16/14	Politika. Vypusk ot 16.04.2014 [Politics. Episode from 16.04.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
07/18/14	Politika. Vypusk ot 18.07.2014 [Politics. Episode from 18.07.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
08/31/14	Politika. Vypusk ot 31.08.2014 [Politics. Episode from 31.08.2014].	Pervyi Kanal
03/20/14	Večer s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Specialnyi vypusk. Efir ot 20.03.2014 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Special issue. Episode from 20.03.2014].	Rossiya1

03/21/14	Večer s Vladimírom Solovjovym. Specialnyi vypusk. Efir ot 21.03.2014 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Special issue. Episode from 21.03.2014].	Rossiya1
04/11/14	Večer s Vladimírom Solovjovym. Specialnyi vypusk. Efir ot 11.04.2014 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Special issue. Episode from 11.04.2014].	Rossiya1
05/30/14	Večer s Vladimírom Solovjovym: Efir ot 30.05.2014 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov: Episode from 30.05.2014].	Rossiya1
07/20/14	Večer s Vladimírom Solovjovym. Efir ot 20. 07.2014 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Episode from 20.07.2014].	Rossiya1
07/27/14	Večer s Vladimírom Solovjovym. Efir ot 27. 07.2014 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Episode from 27.07.2014]	Rossiya1
10/12/14	Večer s Vladimírom Solovjovym: Efir ot 12.10.2014 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov: Episode from 12.10.2014].	Rossiya1
10/16/14	Večer s Vladimírom Solovjovym. Efir ot 16.10.2014 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov: Episode from 16.10.2014].	Rossiya1
02/28/14	Ukraine: ‘Invasion’ at airport is by Russian soldiers. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6NFkUanVag	CNN
03/04/14	Would Ukraine’s military stand a chance? [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFMrS4UhZY4	CNN
03/04/14	Ukraine standoff brings war of words. [Video file].Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDChTsv3TUY	CNN
03/10/14	Erin Burnett OutFront	CNN
03/17/14	Anderson Cooper 360	CNN
03/30/14	Fareed Zakaria GPS	CNN
04/08/14	Wolf	CNN
04/16/14	Anderson Cooper 360	CNN
04/17/14	Wolf	CNN
04/27/14	New Day Sunday	CNN
05/09/14	Putin’s show of force in Crimea. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVc_Be4I2pY	CNN

07/18/14	Anderson Cooper 360	CNN
07/21/14	Anderson Cooper 360	CNN
07/25/14	Anderson Cooper 360	CNN
08/28/14	Ukraine: 'Full scale invasion' by Russia under way. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzfxkbGtCbY	CNN
11/14/14	Rep. Schiff Discusses ISIS and the Russian Aggression Against Ukraine on CNN. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6NFkUanVag	CNN
03/16/14	Fox News Sunday with Chris Wallace	Fox News
03/17/14	The O'Reilly Factor	Fox News
03/28/14	The O'Reilly Factor	Fox News
04/21/14	The O'Reilly Factor	Fox News
07/17/14	Hannity	Fox News
07/17/14	The real story with Gretchen Carlson	Fox News
07/17/14	The O'Reilly Factor FOX News	Fox News
07/29/14	The O'Reilly Factor FOX News	Fox News

APPENDIX E. MEDIA DATA II

List of news articles, televised news and analytical news shows about Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election examined.

News articles

Pub.Date	Headline	Paper
02/16/18	Zaharova nazvala absurdum obvineniya SSHA 13 rossiyan vo vmeshatelstve v vybory [Zaharova called U.S. accusations against 13 russian nationals in election interference absurd].	Izvestia
02/20/18	Trinadtsat “druzei” Trampa: Politolog Eduard Lozanskii-o neleposti ocherednyh obvinenii spechprokurora Roberta Myullera, predyavlenykh rossiskim blogeram [Thirteen ‘friends’ of Trump: Political analyst Eduard Lozanskii about the absurdity of another set of accusations of Robert Mueller against Russian bloggers].	Izvestia
02/28/18	Tak byl li sgovor? Politolog Eduard Lozanskii-o tom, kak v SSHA prodolzhayut poiski “russkoi ruki” v prezidentskih vyborah 2016 goda [Was there a collusion? Political scientist Eduard Lozanskii discusses how the United States continues to seek “Russian hand” in 2016 presidential election].	Izvestia
03/21/18	A vas, Myuller, poproshu zagrulyatsya. Prezident Amerikanskogo universiteta v Moskve Eduard Lozanskii-o tom, kak rabota kommissii spetsprokurora stala otrazheniem politicheskogo krizisa v Vashingtone [And you, Mueller, I will ask to wrap up. President of the American University in Moscow, Eduard Lozanskii discusses how the work of commission of the special persecutor became the reflection of the political crisis in Washington].	Izvestia
04/30/18	Sgovora net, no Rossiya vse ravno “vinovata”. Politolog Eduard Lozanskii-ob ocherednoi pobede prezidenta SSHA Donalda Trampa i otstutstvii svyazei mezhdu nim i Rossiei [There is no collusion, but Russia is still “guilty”. Political scientist Eduard Lozanskii discusses another victory of U.S. president Donald Trump and the absence of connections between him and Russia].	Izvestia
06/19/18	Rezultat izvesten. Professor Aleksandr Domrin-o tom, chto rassledovanie Roberta Myullera ne mozhet povliyat na populyarnost Donalda Trampa [The result is known. Professor Aleksandr Domrin discusses that Robert Mueller’s investigation cannot influence the popularity of Donald Trump].	Izvestia

08/23/18	Dialog protiv techeniya. Politolog Aleksandr Vedrussove-o geopoliticheskom kontekste vstrechi Nikolaya Patrusheva i Dzhona Boltona [Dialogue against the flow. Political scientist Aleksandr Vedrussov discusses the geopolitical context of the meeting between Nikolai Patrushev and John Bolton].	Izvestia
08/27/18	Upravlyaemaya konfrontatsiya v deistvii. Politolog Dmitrii Suslov -o tom, pochemu nedavno zapushennyi mezhgosudarstvennyi dialog Rossii i SSHA ne privodit k razryadke v dvuhstoronnih otnosheniyah [Managed confrontation in action. Political scientist Dmitrii Suslov discusses why recent inter-state dialogue between Russia and the U.S. is not leading toward de-escalation of bilateral relations].	Izvestia
08/29/18	Al'yans prinuzhdeniya. Politolog Eduard Lozanskii- o tom, gde sleduet iskat korni nyneshnei konfrontatsii mezhdru SSHA i Rossiei [Forced alliance. Political scientist discusses where to look for the roots of confrontation between the U.S. and Russia].	Izvestia
06/07/19	Vopros s pristrastiyem: Putin razyasnil mirovym SMI pozitsiyu Rossii. Prezident otkrovenno rasskazal o razviti otnoshenii RF i SSHA, vmeshatelstve Moskvy v vybory i vozmozhnosti snyatiya sanktsii [A question with sensibilities: Putin explained Russia's position to world mass media. President transparently discussed the development of U.S.-Russia relations, Moscow's interference in election and the possibility of lifting sanctions].	Izvestia
10/02/19	Putin poshutil o vmeshatelstve Rossii v vybory SShA [Putin joked about Russia's interference in U.S. election].	Izvestia
07/27/16	Peskov oproverg vliyanie Rossii na vybory v SSHA [Peskov has refuted Russia's influence on U.S. election].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
09/06/16	MID: Obvineniya vo vmeshatelstve v predvybornuyu kampaniyu v SSHA smehotvorny [MFA: Accusations concerning interference in the election campaign in the US are absurd].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
09/06/16	Klinton snova uvidela "rossiiskuu ugrozu" v izbiratelnoi sisteme SSHA [Clinton has again seen "Russian threat" in the U.S. election system].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
12/27/16	Russkie idut. Polzovateli sotsetei SSHA vysmeivayut antirossiiskuyu paranoyu svoih politikov [The Russians are coming. U.S. social network users make fun of anti-Russia paranoia of their politicians].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta

12/30/16	Vydvorenie 35 diplomatov RF is SSHA stalo samym masshtabnym za 30 let [The removal of 35 Russian diplomats from the U.S. became the largest in 30 years].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
06/02/17	Putin: Zapadnye kollegi na golovu nam seli, nogi svesili i zhvachku zhuyut [Western colleagues have sat on our heads, hang down their legs and are chewing a bubble gum].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
06/03/17	Putin: Na vybory v SSHA mogli vliyat amerikanskije hakery [Putin. U.S. election could have been influenced by American hackers].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
06/05/17	Putin: SSHA aktivno vmeshivayutsya v politicheskie protsessy po vsemu miru [Putin: The U.S. actively interferes in political processes around the world].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
06/06/17	Lavrov prizval SSHA prekratit' antirossiiskuu "svistoplyasku" [Lavrov has asked the U.S. to stop anti-Russian "mess"].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
10/31/17	MID RF: Zapad ne predyavil dokazatelstv vmeshatelstva RF v vybory [MFA RF: The West hasn't provided any proof of Russian Federation's interference in election].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
01/30/18	Posol Anatolii Antonov: SSHA sovershili ocherednoi vypad protiv Rossii [Anatolii Antonov: The U.S. has made another attack against Russia].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
03/28/18	"Chudovishe iz morskikh glubin": Kak SSHA demoniziruyut obraz Rossii ["A monster from the sea": How the U.S. demonizes Russia's image].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
04/27/18	Klimov: Tema "rossiiskoi urgozy" budet raskruchivatsya v SHSA do noyabrya [Klimov: the Topic of "Russian threat" will be promoted in the U.S. till November].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
08/02/18	Senatory SSHA vnesli uzhestochayushii antirossiiskie sankcii zakonoproekt. [U.S. senators introduced a tough bill of anti-Russian sanctions].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
10/05/18	MID RF schel opasnym nagnetenie SSHA napryashennosti v otnosheniyah [MFA RF considers it threatening that the U.S. builds up tension in relations].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
12/20/18	MID RF: Novye sankcii govoryat o zhelanii SSHA obostrit otnosheniya s Moskvoy (New U.S. sanctions speak to their desire to aggravate relations with Moscow].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta

12/22/18	Zaharova raskritikovala spekulyacie o vmeshatelstve RF v vybory v SSHA [Zaharova has criticized speculations about Russian interference in U.S. election].	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
07/25/16	Democrats allege D.N.C. the hack is part of Russian effort to elect Donald Trump	N.Y. Times
08/29/16	Harry Reid cites evidence of Russian tampering in U.S. vote, and Seeks F.B.I. inquiry	N.Y. Times
10/05/16	Let's get Putin's attention	N.Y. Times
12/13/16	The perfect weapon: How russian cyberpower invaded the U.S.	N.Y. Times
12/14/16	Putin is waging information warfare. Here is how to fight back	N.Y. Times
12/29/16	Obama strikes back at Russia for election hacking	N.Y. Times
12/29/16	Two Russian compounds, caught up in history's echoes	N.Y. Times
01/07/17	How we fool ourselves on Russia	N.Y. Times
05/17/17	Robert Mueller, former F.B.I. Director, is named special counsel for Russia investigation	N.Y. Times
02/17/18	Russia wanted Trump to win. And it wanted to get caught	N.Y. Times
04/30/18	Truth has stopped mattering in the Russia investigation	N.Y. Times
07/27/18	Russian hackers appear to shift focus to U.S. power grid	N.Y. Times
08/02/18	How the U.S. is fighting Russian election interference	N.Y. Times
03/24/19	Mueller finds no Trump-Russia conspiracy, but stops short of exonerating the President on obstruction.	N.Y. Times
03/24/19	Mueller finds no Trump-Russia conspiracy, but stops short of exonerating President on obstruction	N.Y. Times
11/05/16	In America's democratic showcase, the world sees a model of what not to do	Wash.Post
06/14/16	Russian government hackers penetrated DNC, stole opposition research on Trump	Wash.Post
07/22/16	WikiLeaks releases thousands of documents about Clinton and internal deliberations	Wash.Post
07/27/16	By November, Russian hackers could target voting machines	Wash.Post

11/15/16	In our new Cold War, deterrence should come before détente.	Wash.Post
11/17/16	The United States needs to hold Russia accountable for its aggression	Wash.Post
12/23/16	Russia attacked our democracy. That demands intense review by congress	Wash.Post
12/16/16	Transcript: Obama's end-of-year news conference on Syria, Russian hacking and more	Wash.Post
01/01/17	The new world order, 2017	Wash.Post
04/21/17	We're teaching our students not to care about democracy	Wash.Post
06/01/17	What does Russia think about all this? 'Washington has gone crazy.'	Wash.Post
06/25/17	Europe has been working to expose Russian meddling for years	Wash.Post
10/15/17	Want to deepen our democracy. Get ready	Wash.Post
09/17/18	Our democracy is in crisis': Hillary Clinton takes aim at Trump in scathing new essay	Wash.Post
03/25/19	William Barr has made this a win for Moscow	Wash.Post
03/25/19	The media had every right to pursue Russia-Trump. But...	Wash.Post

Televised news and analytical shows.

Retrieved from Pervyi Kanal, Russia 1, and Internet Archive and YouTube platforms.

Air Date	News/Political Talk-Show Name	TV channel
10/17/16	Vremya pokazhet: Komu nuzhna horoshaya Rossiya? [Time will tell: Who needs good Russia?]	Pervyi Kanal
12/12/16	Vremya pokazhet: Kak Rossii reagirovat na obvineniya?[Time will tell: How should Russia react to accusations?]	Pervyi Kanal
12/15/16	Vremya pokazhet:Russkii sled na amerikanskikh vyborah [Time will tell: Russian traces on U.S. election]	Pervyi Kanal
12/22/16	Vremya pokazhet:Mir pod ugrozoi [Time will tell: The world is under the threat]	Pervyi Kanal

12/07/17	Vremya pokazhet: Informatsionnye voyny SSHA [Time will tell: Informational wars]	Pervyi Kanal
12/28/17	Vremya pokazhet: Demokratiya po-amerikanski. [Time will tell: Democracy American style]	Pervyi Kanal
01/12/18	Vremya pokazhet: Demokratiya SSHA pod urgozoi? [Time will tell: Is US democracy under threat?]	Pervyi Kanal
01/10/18	Vremya pokazhet: Pentagon vooruzhaetsya? [Time will tell: Is Pentagon arming itself?	Pervyi Kanal
01/12/18	Vremya pokazhet: “Rossiyskaya karta” SSHA [Time will tell: “Russian map” of the U.S.]	Pervyi Kanal
01/16/18	Vremya pokazhet: Novaya gonka vooruzhenii [Time will tell: New arms race]	Pervyi Kanal
04/18/18	Vremya pokazhet: Bez sgovora. [Time will tell: Without collusion]	Pervyi Kanal
02/14/19	Vremya pokazhet: Amerikanskije pretenzii [Time will tell. American claims].	Pervyi Kanal
04/10/19	Vremya pokazhet: Sankcii za “plohoe povedenie”? [Time will tell: Sanctions for “bad behavior?”]	Pervyi Kanal
10/09/16	Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Efir ot 09.10.2016 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Episode from 09.10.2016]	Rossiya1
06/14/17	Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Efir ot 14.06.2017 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Episode from 14.06.2017]	Rossiya1
06/20/17	Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Efir ot 20.06.2017 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Episode from 20.06.2017]	Rossiya1
01/14/18	Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Efir ot 14.01.2018 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Episode from 14.01.2018].	Rossiya1
02/14/19	Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Eskalaciya borby s SSHA: “Dyavolskie sanksii” idut na smenu adskim” (Efir ot 14.02.2019 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Escalation of battle with the U.S.: ‘devil’ sanctions are replacing ‘hellish’ sanctions (Episode from 14.02.2019)]	Rossiya1
03/28/19	Vecher s Vladimirom Solovyovym. SSHA podtalkivayut mir k razdoru i voine (Efir ot 28.03.2019) [Evening with Vladimir	Rossiya1

	Solovyov. The U.S. is pushing the world toward discord and war (Episode from 28.03.2019)]	
04/24/19	Večer s Vladimirom Solovyovym. SSHA gotovyat obezoruživayushii yadernyi udar po Rossii (Efir ot 24.04.2019 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. The U.S. preparing a disarming nuclear attack on Russia (Episode from 24.04.2019)]	Rossiya1
05/15/19	Večer s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Kreml pod pričelom: Opublikovan doklad razvedki SSHA (Efir ot 15.05.2019 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Kremlin is targeted: U.S. intelligence has published a report (Episode from 15.05.2019)]	Rossiya1
05/29/19	Večer s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Dostigli dna: Shokurushaya novost iz SSHA (Efir ot 29.05.2019 [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. We've reached the bottom: Shocking news from the U.S. (Episode from 29.05.2019)].	Rossiya1
06/25/19	Večer s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Amerika gotovit beskontaktnuyu voynu protiv Rossii (Efir ot 25.06.2019) [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. America is preparing contactless war against Russia (Episode from 25.06.2019)]	Rossiya1
07/21/19	Večer s Vladimirom Solovyovym. Solovyov: Amerikancy demonstriruyut silu ili nachinayut nastoyashuyu voynu? (Efir ot 21.07.2019) [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov. Solovyov: Americans demonstrate force or begin a real war? (Episode from 21.07.2019)]	Rossiya1
07/25/16	Wolf	CNN
10/12/16	Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer	CNN
12/16/16	Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer	CNN
12/16/16	Rep. Elijah Cummings says Russian hacking is a “struggle for the soul of our democracy.” [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGQ9PzAlp6w	CNN
12/28/16	The Lead with Jake Tapper	CNN
12/30/16	At this hour with Berman and Bolduan	CNN
12/30/16	CNN Newsroom with Carol Costello	CNN
03/12/17	Fareed Zakaria GPS	CNN
03/25/17	CNN Newsroom with Fredericka Whitfield	CNN

05/30/17	New Day	CNN
05/31/17	CNN Tonight with Don Lemon CNN	CNN
06/06/17	CNN Newsroom with John Berman and Poppy Harlow	CNN
06/21/17	Wolf	CNN
07/06/17	Erin Burnett Out Front	CNN
07/07/17	New Day	CNN
10/18/17	Inside Politics	CNN
12/18/17	Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer	CNN
02/16/18	Wolf	CNN
07/06/18	Anderson Cooper 360 CNNC	CNN
07/13/18	Inside Politics	CNN
08/03/18	New Day with Alisyn Camerota and John Berman	CNN
12/04/18	Cuomo Primetime	CNN
02/19/18	Situation room with Wolf Blitzer	CNN
01/07/19	Cuomo Prime Time	CNN
02/20/19	Anderson Cooper 360 CNN	CNN
3/25/19	Anderson Cooper 360 CNN	CNN
04/19/19	The Mueller Report Special Coverage	CNN
05/07/19	CNN Newsroom with Brooke Baldwin	CNN
06/13/19	Anderson Cooper 360 CNN	CNN
09/06/16	Special Report with Bret Baier	Fox News
09/11/16	Fox News Sunday with Chris Wallace	Fox News
09/15/16	Heightened concerns that Russia will hack US election [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-MxwqmaNMU	Fox News
09/15/16	Russian hacking could cast doubts on US election results. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qVq3_FhZ9Y	Fox News

10/12/16	Special Report with Bret Baier	Fox News
12/13/16	Special Report with Bret Baier	Fox News
12/15/16	Hannity	Fox News
12/18/16	Fox News with Chris Wallace	Fox News
12/21/16	US imposes more sanctions on Russia over Crimea. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE5UQQllIGTY&t=4s	Fox News
12/30/16	Fox and Friends First	Fox News
12/30/16	Hannity	Fox News
12/30/16	What effects do US sanctions have on Russia. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=370_Nhjf2s	Fox news
03/03/17	Special Report with Bret Baier	Fox News
06/08/17	Tucker Carlson Tonight	Fox News
06/25/17	Fox Report Sunday	Fox News
06/26/17	Hannity	Fox News
07/07/17	Special Report with Bret Baier	Fox News
07/13/17	Tucker Carlson Tonight	Fox News
09/30/17	Shawn reports: The Russian bots attacked US. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CEJJwmQL-M	Fox News
10/30/17	The Daily Briefing with Dana Perino	Fox News
02/16/18	Tucker Carlson Tonight	Fox News
02/20/18	Hannity	Fox News
03/05/18	America's Newsroom with Bill Hemmer and Sandra Smith	Fox News
03/17/18	Columnist calls on countries to expel Russian ambassadors. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GXVr-u-hmg	Fox News
03/18/18	Russia expert discusses how to restrain an emboldened Putin. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-F3oag2Y1Ug	Fox News

04/10/18	Shepard Smith Reporting	Fox News
07/13/18	Special Report with Bret Baier	Fox News
03/24/19	Scandalous	Fox News
04/18/19	Special Report with Bret Baier	Fox News
05/14/19	Outnumbered	Fox News
05/15/19	Fox News Night with Shannon Bream	Fox News

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