THE STRUGGLES OF SERBIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN TO SUCCEED IN THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Mirjana Cvjetkovic
B.A., California State University, Sacramento, 2007

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

EDUCATION
(Behavioral Sciences/Gender Equity Studies)

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

FALL
2009
THE STRUGGLES OF SERBIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN TO SUCCEED IN THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

A Thesis

by

Mirjana Cvjetkovic

Approved by:

______________________________, Committee Chair
Sherrie Carinci

______________________________, Second Reader
Jana Noel

______________________________
Date
Student:  Mirjana Cvjetkovic

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Robert Pritchard, Department Chair  
Department of Teacher Education
Abstract

of

THE STRUGGLES OF SERBIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN TO SUCCEED
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Mirjana Cvjetkovic

Statement of the Problem

This thesis examined the struggles of 10 Serbian immigrant women in their attempts to succeed in the American education system. This thesis examined issues pertinent to women, immigrants, and gender equity in homeland and the United States. This study addressed the following questions: “What are the struggles in achieving higher education for Serbian immigrant women?” and “What is it that educators need to know about Serbian women to make their educational experiences more fulfilling and successful?”

Sources of Data

The data used in this study was collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Quantitative data was collected using a Likert scale survey looking specifically at gender issues and comfort with the American education system. Findings were presented through percentages. Qualitative data was collected using open-ended questions and the interview method designed to look at
struggles Serbian immigrant women feel they are faced with while attempting to earn an education, and the struggles the same 10 women feel Serbian immigrant men are faced with when attempting to earn an education. The data were presented using a thematic approach.

Conclusions Reached

The findings in this study indicate two strong sub groups within this group of 10 Serbian immigrant women. One sub group was women with children who reported time and familial obligations as their primary obstacle to succeeding educationally. The other sub group was women without children who stated that English barrier was their main obstacle to succeeding educationally. Unexpected findings emerged from open-ended questions focusing on the 10 women’s thoughts on what keeps Serbian immigrant women and men from achieving their educational goals in the United States. Participants provided gender stereotypical answers. Participants felt that women don’t continue their education because they have to take care of the family, and they felt that men don’t continue their education because they have to provide for the family. These findings contradict findings from the interviews where women insisted that gender does not affect their lives or education.

______________________________, Committee Chair
Sherrie Carinci

______________________________  
Date
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to three most important women in my life. To my grandma, Radojka, who never had the opportunity to be educated passed second grade, yet saw the importance of education for women and pushed her daughter, my mom, to be educated. To my wonderful mother, Andja, who endured many struggles and obstacles. She earned an education and bravely stepped and soared in the nontraditional career she pursued. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my loving and incredibly intelligent sister Brankica; a woman who overcame many obstacles included in this thesis and earned two degrees. These wonderful women are an inspiration to me and the most wonderful support system and advocates for education.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and ability to achieve everything that I have achieved thus far. I have been blessed with wonderful people in my life and the ability to pursue my educational goals.

I would like to thank my parents for supporting me all my life. Thank you for your emotional and financial support. To my mother Andja Cvjetkovic, an amazing woman. Mama, thank you for always telling me to go study. Thank you for caring as much as you do, for wonderful lunches, and for your dedication to my educational and personal success. You always made sure to remind me of my deadlines. To my father Dragoljub Cvjetkovic, a wonderful man. Tata, thank you for encouraging me to keep going to school and doing the best I can. Thank you for never regretting not having a son. You both have been my biggest supporters in my educational journey, and especially my life journey.

I would like to thank my big sister, Brankica Markovic, who always placed my needs ahead of hers. Thank you for the tough love, and the gentle love. I am forever grateful to you for all your guidance and support. You taught me to write my first essay, you inspired me to always do better in school, and more importantly in life.

I would like to thank my best friend Miljan Draganic. Thank you for always encouraging me to follow my dreams, for supporting me in anything that I do, and for always lending an ear. I am grateful for all the late nights you spent with me proofreading and editing my thesis. You helped me to see what is important in life.
You never once refused to help me in any way I needed. I thank God every day for you. I am honored to be part of your life. Volim te.

To Dr. Jana Noel who through her battle with cancer found time and energy to offer me support. You are a wonderful professor. Thank you for accepting to be my reader. I am grateful.

To Dr. Sherrie Carinci who supported me and encouraged me every step of the way. You always found the time in your busy schedule to help me and offer your guidance. Thank you for always being available for comments, suggestions, questions, and whatever else may have come along the way. You are my mentor.

Finally, I would like to thank the wonderful women who volunteered for this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated and without which this study wouldn’t have been completed. I am grateful to each of you for sharing your life stories with me, and for your bravery. May you achieve greatness in your further studies in life and education. Thank you and my God bless you.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the struggles of Serbian women who have immigrated to the United States in the last immigration wave, during or after the civil war in former Yugoslavia. Immigrants seeking better lives and freedom founded the United States of America, and they continue to come to this country for the same two reasons its founding fathers did: for better life and freedom. However, not all immigrants have found the reward they sought. Many immigrants have endured harsh discriminations on the basis of their age, gender, skin color, and/or geographic location, all in the pursuit of the American dream. Just as the early immigrants struggled to succeed in the United States, the most recent immigrants still struggle as previous generations. Immigration is defined as “the process of entering another country in order to live there” (Longman, 2000, p. 394). In 1990, immigrant population in the United States was at 19.8 million, and by 2005 that number had grown up to 37 million (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Past research on immigrant students in the United States has mainly focused on Hispanic and Asian populations (Erisman & Loony, 2007), and the research focusing on immigrants from the former Yugoslavia has grouped all its nations together (Stevanovic, n.d.). Studies specific to education of Serbian women, especially Serbian immigrant women, are missing from research. Their experiences and struggles in this country have never been examined or explored. This study reviews Serbian women who immigrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina, a newly formed country after the fall
of Yugoslavia. This thesis will provide missing research on Serbian women in education.

When the United States was first established, educating its children was not the law, but a privilege. Only the wealthy families were able to afford to send their sons to school. Many people were oblivious to the lack of gender equality in the American schools and the subjugation of women by refusing them education (Danzer, de Alva, Krieger, Wilson, & Woloch, 2006). Gender equity in education is defined as “the elimination of sex role stereotyping and sex bias from the educational process, thus providing the opportunity and environment to validate and empower individuals as they make appropriate career and life choices” (Owens, Smothers, & Love, 2003, p. 132). Only through many years of teaching about gender inequality and its negative effects on the daughters of America, did people begin to examine sexism in American classrooms, and are currently teaching about women in history and in education (Danzer et al., 2006). In addition to being effected by their immigrant status, Serbian immigrant women in the United States education are affected by this sexism.

Purpose of the Thesis

This study was designed to understand the struggles of Serbian immigrant women in achieving higher education. More specifically, the researcher examined the parental expectations of the participants, participant’s familiarity with the American education system, and the influences of gender inequity in family, culture, and school. Additionally, this study addresses the following questions, “What are the struggles in achieving higher education for Serbian immigrant women?” and “What is it that
educators need to know about Serbian women to make their educational experiences more fulfilling and successful?"

Significance of the Study

This researcher searched many databases for possible resources on the Serbian population in the United States. Information on the Serbian population in the United States concentrates on people from countries of Former Yugoslavia and not specifically on Serbian women (Freeman, 1998; Jovanovic, 2002). There is little research concentrated on studying Serbian immigrant women in the United State education system. Research on Serbian immigrant women in education will add a body of knowledge that is missing in research on this group.

Methods

This study is qualitative and quantitative in nature. It is an ethnographic study conducted on Serbian immigrant women and their culture. The researcher used a survey to gather quantitative data, and open-ended questions and face-to-face interviews to gather qualitative data.

Ten Serbian immigrant women from Northern California volunteered for this study. The participants were gathered using the snowball effect (Heckathorn, 1997). The snowball effect begins with a researcher contacting individuals they are already familiar with, who fit the criteria and asking them if they know any women who also fit the criteria and could be interviewed for the purposes of this study. Each participant was given a questionnaire of 34 questions. Demographic questions were presented in the beginning of the survey.
After participants completed the demographic questions, they were asked to fill out a Likert scale survey about parental expectations, American education system, and gender roles and issues within their family and school. Participants were then asked to fill out questions about parental education and career background, and to fill out two open ended questions. Finally, face-to-face interviews were conducted with each participant individually. The questionnaire was designed to address three major issues: family history and gender concerns within the culture, experiences with the American education system, and present struggles and choices in school and career.

Interviews and surveys were analyzed for common themes. Ten Serbian immigrant women between the ages of 18 and 48 participated in this study. All participants have immigrated to the United States between 1995 and 2000. All the women in this study have attempted an education in the United States. Some women have quit, some are currently attempting to earn their degree, and others have successfully earned their degree.

Limitations

This study concentrated on 10 Serbian immigrant women located in North California, and cannot be generalized to the entire Serbian population. The sample size is small and the findings are only representative of the sample. Having a Serbian researcher from the same community interviewing participants might result in some participants' important information being held back due to the fear of being judged. Although the consent letter informs participants of anonymity, due to the small
population of Serbian women in North California, participants may fear they will be recognized through their answers and might hold back relevant information.

In addition, some participants may feel the need to present their culture and themselves in a more positive way than their experiences have shown. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) state that self-reported instruments present some problems in research. It is difficult to assess with certainty if a participant in research is expressing own attitudes, interests, values, and personality, or if the participant is expressing what they consider to be more socially acceptable.

Thinking that certain answers might help the researcher or that the researcher wants them to answer questions in a specific way might sway participants to answer question in a particular way they might not necessarily answer otherwise. This variable is also known as pleasing the researcher (Creswell, 2005). Another confounding variable is the survey itself. Participants were given a consent letter stating that the researcher is from the Gender Equity program and the survey asks many questions regarding gender. Participants might form their own opinions of what exactly is being studied and how they should or should not answer the questions.

Theoretical Basis for the Study

American women were the first to face gender barriers in the American education system. Those same barriers are continually facing women who immigrate to the United States. The struggles that immigrants are faced with in their educational pursuit, gender expectations in the homeland, and parental expectations of immigrant children when they pursue higher education in North America are evident barriers to
pursuing higher education. The main purpose of this thesis is to answer the following questions: What can educators do to make educational experiences better for Serbian women in pursuit of higher education in the United States? What is it that Serbian women want educators to know about them to aid them in their educational path?

Many researchers have theorized the correct way students should be taught in school. Some of those researchers include Dewey (1897), hooks (1994), Sadker and Zittleman (2005), Gilligan (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), and Freire (Smith, 2002). Each theorist differs in his or her view of proper educational path for students, yet they all pull away from the traditional Eurocentric way of teaching.

Dewey (1897) examined education and how students should be taught in the American education system. He emphasized that knowledge is strictly relative to human interaction with the world. He also emphasized how using personal experiences and opinions in the classroom setting are imperative to a student’s learning. Dewey emphasized collaborative work in the classroom, and students learning from each other. In addition to children learning from experience in school, Dewey spoke of teachers trusting students to do the right thing.

Similarly, Freire (Smith, 2002) studied how students learn in a classroom setting. He observed a Eurocentric method of teaching and found that through this method, the teacher is the center of attention and stands in front of the class distributing information to students. The students write it down and absorb in a manner which can be reiterated later. He called this approach to teaching “banking” system. He concentrated on the “banking” education and the problem this method
poses in teaching our students. In the “banking” education, the classroom is teacher centered and students absorb information and reiterate it back when necessary. Freire proposes a different learning environment in which students were encouraged to express their opinions and views. Freire (1971) insists on the importance of students’ voice in the classroom. A voice is “an expressed wish, choice, or opinion” (Webster’s New, 2002, p. 1601). Freire believes that students’ experiences and voices are a vital contribution to a learning environment in the classroom. His theory values a learner as a valuable asset to the classroom and the learning environment; a learner is a contributor with valid knowledge.

Brown and Gilligan’s (1992) research concentrates on how young girls lose their voice, and by the end of middle school they are afraid to state their opinions and their mind. They examined why exactly girls no longer feel comfortable expressing their feelings and opinions when they exit middle school. Gender researchers such as Brown & Gilligan, and Sadker and Sadker (1994), found that girls are overlooked in education. Sadker and Zittleman (2005) found that girls are not called on as often as boys in the classroom and are not rewarded with as much attention as boys are. These findings reflect of a classroom in which both genders are not equally welcome to express their feelings and opinions in the classroom (Sadker & Zittleman (2005).

bell hooks (1994) spoke of a classroom where students are not restricted. She states that the professor must genuinely value everyone’s presence. Additionally, she states that there must be recognition that everyone influences the dynamic of a classroom, and everyone contributes to the classroom. hooks spoke of the need of
excitement in the classroom, and states that the professor and students together create the excitement in the classroom.

hooks writes on the importance of a feminist classroom, and encourages a feminist classroom as a necessity for everyone to feel comfortable and share their experiences and views. “Seeing the classroom always as a communal place enhances the likelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community” (hooks, 1994, p. 184). She believed that every student should contribute to the class discussions, and everyone’s opinions should be acknowledged. hooks spoke of a classroom being a boring place and stated that input of the professor and students together is necessary for an exciting classroom. When everyone in the classroom is comfortable to share their opinions, feelings of community are more likely to arise. Similarly, Noddings (Smith, 2004) talks about connected knowing and the effects it has on the learner. She states that when an individual understands they feel that they have been responded to.

Definitions of Relevant Terms

*Acculturation* – “the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group” (Acculturation, n.d.).

*Culture Shock* - social change and the ability to understand American values while reconciling with the values of own culture (Trueba, 1993).

*Feminist Classroom* – “Seeing the classroom always as a communal place enhances the likelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community” (hooks, 1994, p. 184).
**Gender** – One’s culturally defined and perceived sex, such as male and female (Renzetti, & Curran, 2003).

**Gender Equity** – in education is defined as “the elimination of sex role stereotyping and sex bias from the educational process, thus providing the opportunity and environment to validate and empower individuals as they make appropriate career and life choices” (Owens, Smothers, & Love, 2003, p. 132).

**Immigration** – “the process of entering another country in order to live there” (Longman, 2000, p. 394).

**Krsna Slava** –

the Patron Saint’s Day. This uniquely Serbian religious holiday, reminiscent of the prehistoric harvest festivals, is celebrated once a year in commemoration of the family’s conversion to Christianity, when each family chose its patron saint, which derived from the customs of worshipping protective spirits. Passing from father to son, this joyous holiday is observed with friends and family enjoying sumptuous foods, often with music and dancing as well. (Stevanovic, n.d., Religion para. 15)


**Organization of Thesis**

Chapter 1 of this thesis outlines the organization of the thesis. It presents a brief background of the subject, an outline of the thesis, theoretical basis for the study, and relevant terms for the thesis. Chapter 2 presents an extended background of the
subject, and it presents research findings of studies done on the relevant issues. Chapter 3 presents the methods used in the study, and presents information on participants, procedures, and data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 presents the analysis and the discussion of the study.

Background of the Researcher

This researcher was born in Bosnia, Former Yugoslavia. When she was six years old, the war in Former Yugoslavia began and her family moved from one place to another, until finally settling in Sacramento, California when she was 13 years of age. The researcher grew up in a small family of four, and a wonderfully large extended family. Growing up with a sister and no brothers, this researcher heard many comments from outsiders addressed to her parents about their two daughters and no sons. This struck this researcher’s interest in cultural and social influences of gender equality. Regardless of outsiders’ comments, this researcher’s parents raised her and her sister with pride and guidance that they may do anything they dream and that they should become the best that they can become. This researcher received a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology from California State University, Sacramento in 2007. She was introduced to the Gender Equity program in 2006, and immediately decided that it was the appropriate educational path for her.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This chapter presents literature review about the history of women in the United States, and their struggle to enter the education system. It also describes literature on immigrants in the United States and their struggles to enter the education system in the United States, as well as to acculturate to the American life and culture without losing their own culture. More specifically, this chapter discloses literature review on Serbian history, culture, and religion; gender equity in the homeland, and Serbian immigration are also presented. There is no research that concentrates on Serbian immigrants’ struggles in education, more specifically Serbian immigrant women’s struggles in achieving higher education. This thesis examines and identifies the struggles Serbian immigrant women are faced with in their attempt to achieve higher education in the American education system.

History of Women and Education

When the history of the United States is examined, few women like Susan B. Anthony, Rosie the Riveter, and Rosa Parks are represented, and girls learning from that history rarely see themselves doing great things or achieving greatness. History shows that females and males were not allowed the same rights, they were not treated the same, and their potential was not viewed by their knowledge and abilities, but by their gender (Danzer et al., 2006). Girls were expected to fulfill the role of wife and mother and were expected to learn domestic skills (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Danzer et al.). Women were reserved to the home, and that is where they learned domestic arts
and skills. They were not allowed to receive the formal education boys received (Sadker & Sadker). They were daughters and wives, and their education consisted of home economics (Fox, 1989; Danzer et al., 2006).

When females were finally allowed to go to school, they did not receive equal education. Smaller communities could not afford to build separate schools for girls, so they divided the school into sections for boys and girls.

With true American ingenuity, towns and rural communities built one high school and then pretended that they had built two. Entering by separate doors, boys and girls went directly to their assigned single-sex area. Sometimes they went to different floors, or boys went to one side of the building and girls to the other. Frequently the girls were taught by women and the boys by men, so they continued to learn their own sex-segregated worlds. (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 17)

Although girls were accepted into the same schools, they were not in the same classrooms and receiving the same lessons. Seminary schools were created for girls whose parents refuted the idea of boys and girls going to the same schools (Sadker & Sadker).

Seminaries were the “safe havens for high school age girls to learn to become fit companions for their husbands, the first teachers to their children, and the moral and spiritual cornerstone of the family” (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 19). In addition to teaching women to become good mothers and wives, seminary schools offered classes in math, history, geography, language, art, music, writing, and literature (Danzer et al.,
Although, the primary purpose of seminaries was to produce good wives and mothers, they produced more than educated wives; they produced future teachers. Eighty percent of graduates from seminary schools went on to become teachers, until they married (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). For the women to become teachers was considered natural, because teaching was believed to be an extension of the home.

Slowly, women in the United States earned many of the same privileges afforded to men. However, simply because the privileges were earned does not portray that equality was awarded to women as well. Lips (1989) found that even toward the end of the 20th century, by adolescence, girls have learned that their work is not as important as their role of a mother and wife. This research suggested that women continued to base their occupational choices on gender-stereotyped perceptions of family roles (Lips).

Lips (1989) examined tradition and its effects on young women and found that, young women are expected to marry and to assume household chores, they are supposed to be wives and mothers, yet they are also supposed to be employed. Not many expectations for women have changed through the two hundred years of fighting for change. From manners, mind, motherhood, and morals, and educating women to be first teachers of the nation’s sons, to career women, one thing has stayed the same: duty of mother and wife are still portrayed as number one to personal desires. Women are still expected to be mothers, and to place their employment and careers second to their husbands and children (Lips). Cinnamon (2006) conducted a similar study looking at the work and family conflict for women and men. The results indicated that women
anticipated higher levels of work interfering with family and family interfering with work than did men. These study findings suggest that women are more affected by the need to balance family and career than men are.

While girls struggled historically to earn the right to be educated and included in the educational experience (Danzer et al., 2006), the struggle is not over for today’s girls and women. Sanders (2002) found that most professors taught gender equity less than two hours a semester. In schools, girls might seem at an advantage because of they earn better grades than boys, however, in the United States colleges and universities are more concerned with test scores than grades when deciding on whom to admit to their school (Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). Boys are found to outscore girls on most tests required for a four year college entry (Sadker & Zittleman).

Gender and United States Education

Owens et al. (2003) examined studies conducted on gender equity in school. They report that studies have found that girls were enrolling in more math and science classes in 1980s than they did in 1960s, however, now there is evidence that shows that numbers of girls in math and science classes are decreasing again. Additionally, they report evidence that girls opt out of more difficult classes, such as math, science and computer technology, because they perceive them as masculine classes. This happens during the transition between junior high school and high school. Girls were found to lose interest in the perceived masculine classes resulting in fewer opportunities in college and ultimately careers (Owens et al., 2003; Sadker & Zittleman, 2005).
Gender inequalities were not only seen in education of the American youth, but also in higher education of the American people. However, the gender gap in medical school graduates has gotten significantly smaller from 1970 to 1998.

The women’s movement also succeeded in expanding career opportunities for women. For instance, as of 1970, 8 percent of all medical school graduates and 5 percent of all law school graduates were women. By 1998, those proportions have risen to 42 and 44 percent, respectively. (Danzer et al., 2006, p. 780)

Fry (2003) examined gender equity in curriculum and suggests what could be done to fix the inequalities and minimize the struggles girls and women face in education even today. “Gender equity is often viewed in terms of adequate representation of women in curriculum and proportionate opportunities and enrollment for men and women” (Fry, p. 11). Fry suggests a different approach to teaching: a classroom in which all students are comfortable. She states that, “An essential step to achieving gender equity in classrooms is to promote feminist education reform in primary and secondary schools” (Fry, pp. 12-13). The feelings of comfort in the classroom will possibly result in more engagement by women in the classroom. In addition to American women engaging more in the classroom, Serbian immigrant women might feel more comfortable learning in a feminist classroom and may succeed educationally.

Furthermore, Fry (2003) suggests how to promote gender equity in schools. “The answer to promoting gender equity [in schools] does not lie in creating more books and manuals that the majority of teachers will never see. The answer lies in
taking and encouraging action” (Fry, p. 13). Fry also suggests that to construct a positive learning environment that feels safe for all students, educators should promote the importance of community in the classroom to make students feel comfortable and to overlook injustice which is important for the “thought provoking material that feminist educators seek to include” (p. 15). Additionally, Fry stresses the importance of feminist educators to work together to achieve this goal. Serbian immigrant women are not only faced with the challenge of gender equity in school, they are faced with a double challenge. They are immigrants in the classroom speaking a different language and experiencing challenges that other immigrants experience. However, that is not the only challenge these women face, they are women in need of a feminist classroom.

Parental Expectations

Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) examined parental involvement in their children’s education. Their data came from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of approximately 25,000 eighth-grade students. They reported that daughters are involved in school discussions with parents more than sons. They gave two possible reasons: as socialized, girls are more dependent upon their parents, or parents are more engaged in the lives of their daughters. In addition, Carter and Wojtkiewicz reported that parents had higher expectations for their daughters’ educational attainment possibly because currently a post secondary degree is essential for females to get higher paying jobs. They also found that parents are more involved in school on behalf of their sons possibly because behavior problems are more common with males as opposed to females. Furthermore, Carter and Wojtkiewicz found that parents were
less likely to check their daughter’s homework as opposed to their son’s homework. They conclude that this difference could be because daughters are socialized to be good students and are trusted to complete their homework. Parents limited their daughter’s time socializing with friends more than their son’s. They were more likely to limit the amount of time socializing possibly because parents attempt to protect their daughters (Carter and Wojtkiewicz).

Similarly to what Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) found, Atwood (2001) studied, her patients, women in their 20s and 30s who are in therapy. She reports that her patients spoke of gender inequality in their family when growing up. They reported that their parents did not treat them equally to their brothers. They didn’t feel that they had the same privileges that their brothers had. Many women also reported that they did not feel supported by their mothers. Similarly, many women reported feeling that their mothers loved and paid more attention to their brothers, including paying for private education, while the daughters were expected to pay for their own education (Atwood).

Immigrants in the American Education System

In 2005, 12.1% of United States residents were foreign born and 27.8% of Californian residents were foreign born (Camarota, 2005). These immigrants’ age range varies, as well as their education statuses and knowledge of the English language. The majority of immigrants settle in four states, California, New York, Florida, and Texas (Erisman & Looney, 2007), and a great number of these immigrants are women (Hooton & Henriquez, 2006). “Educational researchers
recognize that ESL students do well academically if learning connects with both background and culture simultaneously” (Curtin, 2005, p. 22). With sufficient knowledge of English being vital to succeeding in the United States, Erisman and Looney argue that there are many benefits for the states to further these immigrants’ education. However, to aid immigrants in furthering their educational goals, it is important to first understand the barriers that are in their educational path.

With so many immigrants living in the U.S. today, it is difficult to adjust to a new land and to feel at home in this country. To live comfortably in the United States, immigrants are faced with acculturating to the new land. Yet, many immigrants strongly feel the need to retain their own culture and traditions. Acculturation becomes a very important step toward immigrants’ feeling fully comfortable living in the United States. Acculturation is defined as “the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group” (Acculturation, n.d.). One step toward acculturation is education.

Immigrant Barriers to Education

Erisman and Looney (2007) reported five obstacles that immigrant children face in pursuing higher education. They reported limited English proficiency, financial need, and work and family responsibilities as some of the obstacles immigrants face in the new land. Family responsibilities are a major barrier for immigrants to succeed in the United States.

Because Hispanics and Asians are the majority of immigrants in the United States, most research on immigrants has been conducted to find their struggles and to
guide them to a path toward education (Chu, 2009; Crisostomo & Dee, 2001; Curtin, 2005; Hooton & Henriquez, 2006). In addition to Hispanics and Asians, Erisman and Looney (2007) have examined the needs and struggles of all immigrants regardless of race or nationality, and have found some commonalities. They identified two barriers faced by all immigrants, regardless of where they come from or their socio-economic status. The two barriers are limited English proficiency and lack of familiarity with the American education system (Erisman & Looney).

Without sufficient knowledge of the English language, it is difficult for immigrants to pursue higher education and succeed. Erisman and Looney (2007) stress the importance of affordable and accessible government funded ESL classes, and ESL classes at community colleges. They state that ESL classes might provoke immigrants to further educate themselves, and community colleges are a stepping stone toward that education.

**Limited English Proficiency**

Limited English proficiency is a major obstacle for immigrants in their pursuit of higher education. Chu (2009) reports that 68% of all students in limited English proficiency (LEP) classes are residing in the four states reported by Erisman and Looney (2007) and Illinois. Crisostomo and Dee (2001) report that predictors such as gender, ethnicity, and parental education found to influence college success among the native born population in the United States are not accurate predictors of academic success for English as a second language (ESL) students. They also report that the academic placement tests used to predict success in college for native born students
are not accurate predictors for academic success of immigrant students, yet keep them from entering four year universities. Crisostomo and Dee report that “these students may, instead, attend community colleges, and research shows that many of these students will not continue their education in a four-year institution” (p. 18). If opportunities for pursuing higher education at four-year institutions are limited, Serbian immigrant women are less likely to succeed educationally in the United States.

Financial Need

Financial need is an obstacle to pursuing higher education for immigrants. Erisman and Looney (2007) report that many immigrant students belong to low-income families and are unable to afford a college education. In addition, immigrants are less likely to take out loans and the general population to pay for college. Immigrants are often unaware of financial institutions and opportunities available to them for education purposes. Many immigrants’ parents encourage their children to work instead of go to college because of the immediate financial need for family (Erisman & Looney).

Family Barriers

Among previously mentioned difficulties are also family barriers. Erisman and Looney (2007) report that immigrant college students spend more time on family responsibilities, which make it more difficult for them to succeed in school, although they are highly motivated to succeed. “More than half of immigrant college students are age 24 or older, one-third have dependents, and almost three-quarters work full- or
part-time while attending school” (cited in Erisman & Looney, p. 20); suggesting that they face significant demands from work and family. Immigrant students are at a higher chance of postponing school, or quitting all together, because of such demands expected of them. Freeman (1998) and Jovanovic (2002) found that immigrant women from former Yugoslavia have difficulties with succeeding educationally because lack of affordable childcare causes them to chose family over education.

Gender and Language Acquisition

Learning a language is part of human nature. The rate and speed at which girls and boys learn a language differs. There may also be sex differences in learning a new language. Burman, Bitan, and Booth (2008) found sex differences in language acquisition. They found that girls’ areas of the brain associated with language work harder than boys’ during language tasks. They also found that boys and girls use different parts of the brain when they perform language tasks (Burman et al., 2008). Additionally, Burman et al. (2008) found that in the language areas of the brain, girls showed significantly greater activation than boys suggesting that girls struggle less to learn language than boys.

Learning another language is inevitable by immigrants. It can take students from five to eight years to comprehend English well, but age at immigration is a factor that influences speed at which another language is comprehended (Curtin, 2005). Curtin interviewed ESL students at a Texas elementary school and found that they preferred many examples in their classroom, and both girls and boys expressed that
they learned best when many examples are used to explain material. Immigrants’ language acquisition is vital to their success in the United States.

Immigrant Struggles

Alves (2006) wrote about immigrant struggles in higher education and how their socio-economic-status affects their success. He states that education for immigrants is a “ticket out,” but it comes with a price. The price is the burden of proving that one could succeed. He adds that for immigrants, college is not a time to experiment, it is the time to prove oneself, and because of that immigrant students play it safe. They avoid taking risks because they are afraid of failing.

Similarly to what Alves (2006) found, in a New York magazine article written by children, two students Jackson (age 16) and Shum (age 12) examined and reported the struggles of young immigrants to get ahead (Young Immigrants, 2001). They report that English barriers and inability to learn English quickly keep children from succeeding educationally. Additionally, immigrant parents have many expectations of their kids and put a lot of pressure on their children, which has a great effect on them. Additionally, Hooton and Henriquez (2006) report that women and children, who are a great part of the immigrant population, often struggle to survive. They state that female immigrants have less formal education that causes them to work in lower paid jobs and jobs that are undervalued (Hooton & Henriquez).

Jackson and Shum (Young Immigrants, 2001) reported that when immigrants come to the United States they start at the bottom and they have a hard time moving up. Zolberg, an immigrant, now a professor at a university states that, “Some might
succeed, because they study very hard and they’re ambitious. But it’s not easy, and therefore, a lot of people don’t make it” (as quoted in Young Immigrants, p. 16). He adds that people who immigrate to the United States are more willing to take a chance and are more demanding of their children. Furthermore, Jackson and Shum (Young Immigrants) found that it is more difficult for children who immigrate after the age of 15 to succeed because it is more difficult for them to adapt to the new language and new culture. On the contrary, students whose parents are more financially stable are don’t have the same struggles because they are able to pay for tutoring.

Serbs

Since the late 1800s, Serbian population has grown in the United States. Research suggests that Serbian women entering the United States face various issues when attempting to acculturate to the American society. Serbian immigrant women face struggles in their attempt to achieve higher education. This section briefly examines the religion of Serbian people, gender roles in homeland, and the school experience in homeland of Serbian people. It is imperative to study this specific group because the number of these immigrants is not as high as others’, yet there is a significant population of Serbian women present in the United States schools and education.

Brief History

To better understand the Serbian immigrant population in the United States, it is important to understand the history, culture, and religion of this population. Serbs settled in the Balkans in the seventh century from the area of today’s Byelorussia and
Ukraine (Stevenovic, n.d.). Yugoslavia was formed of the south Slavic people after WWII (Jovanovic, 2002). It consisted of six republics, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia, and two districts, Vojvodina and Kosovo (Jovanovic; Serbia, 2008).

Serbian people call homeland the former Yugoslavia. There are three major religious groups settled in the area: Eastern Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and Muslims. Much turmoil in the 1990s resulted in war between these three religious groups. Serbia and Montenegro are home to majority of Eastern Orthodox Serbs, Croatia is the home to majority of Roman Catholic Croats, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is the home to all three religious groups (Freeman, 1998; Jovanovic, 2002). Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into sections, and during the 1990s Serbian people settled in the section called Republic of Srpska (Jovanovic, 2002; Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2008).

Religion

Serbian people are Eastern Orthodox Christians, and have been practicing Christianity since the ninth century (Stevanovic, n.d.). They celebrate Christmas Eve, Christmas, Easter, and other Christian holidays just as other Christians do. However, Eastern Orthodox Church practices differ from other Christian practices, and Orthodox Christians follow the Julian calendar (Popovic, personal communication, 2009). It is 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar accepted worldwide today. As a result, Serbian people celebrate Christmas on January seventh, and New Year on January 13th (Jovanovic, 2002; Stevanovic, n.d). Easter is celebrated a week following Jewish
Passover and new moon (Popovic, personal communication, 2009). Although women are not allowed to become priestesses, they are very important in church. Orthodox Christian priests are not only permitted to marry, but required in order to become priests (Popovic, personal communication, 2009). Orthodox clergy have two options “Be ordained unmarried and promise to remain that way throughout your career, or get married and then be ordained. Once ordained, there's no turning back” (Broadway, 2002).

When Serbian people converted to Christianity they began celebrating Christian holidays, as well as some holidays unique to Serbs.

The most important Serbian tradition is the yearly observance of *Krsna Slava*, the Patron Saint’s Day. This uniquely Serbian religious holiday, reminiscent of the prehistoric harvest festivals, is celebrated once a year in commemoration of the family’s conversion to Christianity, when each family chose its patron saint, which derived from the customs of worshipping protective spirits. Passing from father to son, this joyous holiday is observed with friends and family enjoying sumptuous foods, often with music and dancing as well. The central elements which enhance the solemnity of *Krsna Slava* are: *slavska sveca*, a long candle which must burn all day; the votive light lit in front of the icon representing the picture of the family patron saint; and incense burning. Two foods especially prepared: *koljivo*...made with boiled wheat, sugar, and ground nuts; and *krsni kolac*, which is a ritual round bread baked solely for this occasion...The priest visits the homes and conducts a ceremony in which the
kolac is raised three times symbolizing the Holy Trinity. He and the head of
the family cut a cross on the bottom of the kolac into which a little wine is
poured to symbolize the blood of Christ. (Stevanovic, n.d. Religion para. 15)

During the ruling of Serbia, it was difficult to retain the Orthodox religion that Serbian
people have practiced since the 9th century. Stories were passed down from generation
to generation explaining the difficulties Serbs experienced in keeping their religion.
They were forced to pay zulum, a very high tax collected often, or to avoid paying
zulum they could choose to become Muslim. Due to high poverty rate under the
Turkish rule, many Serbs were economically forced into Islam (Cvjetkovic, personal
communication, 2008; Stevanovic, n.d.).

*Gender Roles in Homeland*

After WWII, women in former Yugoslavia were viewed as equals, and their
emancipation was linked to national liberation. Women held equal rights to vote, to
political offices, to education, and to employment (Bracewell, 1996). Women were
expected to play many roles. They were the keepers of the home and hearth and
bearers of the nation’s sons, but they were also competent, professional, working, and
their identity was unconnected for the most part to family or husband (Bracewell,
Jovanovic, 2002). After the fall of communism, Yugoslavia was a socialist country
that valued gender equity in the public sphere. Serbian women choose whom to marry
and how many children to have, and many women chose to have one or two children
(Bracewell, 1996). Many women pursued nontraditional careers and participated in
political life, including highest political levels (Jovanovic). Education of Serbian women led to redefining the traditional gender roles (Jovanovic).

In Kosovo in the 1980s, Albanian women were forced to become baby producing machines and the Albanian population was rising (Bracewell, 1996). Simultaneously, Serbian population in Kosovo was declining. Serbian women, individualistic and liberated were led to bear an average of one child (Bracewell). This unwillingness to bear more children resulted in slow, yet sure extinction of the Serbian nation, also known as “white plague,” which women were blamed for.

...There was an emerging sense that emancipation could go too far, and that these same Serbian women were shirking their duty to the nation...Statistics illustrating the tendency for couples to have only one child and projections showing that according to current trends, Serbia proper would soon register more deaths than births contributed to a fear that the Serbian nation was in danger of dying out. (Bracewell, p. 27)

Women were dealing with a double standard, they were emancipated; yet that emancipation was challenged and criticized when women chose their careers over bearing many children.

Along with the choice of the number of children to have, emancipation of women in Serbia brought them many opportunities. Employment and educational opportunities for women were paraded as Serbian pride, especially when compared to the Albanian women forced into polygamist or incest relationships for the purposes of baby breading. Yet, Serbian women were still not equal to Serbian men. Although the
public sphere has demonstrated a great change toward gender equality, private sphere roles had not changed. The same roles women performed within the home during the period of communism, was also performed during the socialist era of the 1980s (Bracewell, 1996).

Bracewell (1996) differentiates theory from practice and states that women were valued as equals, but were subalterns in practice. The ideals of gender equality were the pride of the nation until in Kosovo, the center of Serbian history (Stevanovic, n.d), Serbian people were dying out. Once Albanians have started to settle in Kosovo, the Serbian province became multi national. In fact, birth rate of Albanians was much higher than that of Serbs. “Albanian families in Kosovo have on the average of seven children, and many have up to 10-15” (quoted in Bracewell, 1996, p. 27). The vast difference in birth rate between Serbian and Albanian population in Kosovo effected Serbian women greatly. Suddenly, a Serbian woman had another role to fulfill; she was a mother of the nation. Her role was to regenerate the population.

Those Serbian women who have chosen the route of education and employment instead of motherhood have been criticized as responsible for “white plague” and have been scrutinized in such ways as “If they are to be proper Serbs, women must take their duties as wives and mothers more seriously” (Bracewell, 1996, p. 28). If they choose not to bear many children they are viewed as improper Serbs. Giving birth to sons was deemed important and patriotic.

After the fall of communism in the Former Yugoslavia, women were expected to return to work and assist in constructing the socialist new country (Bracewell,
Women were given the freedom to educate themselves, the freedom to choose their career paths, and to marry and bear children at will. Freeing [women] from some of the duties of motherhood meant that they would be expected in return to contribute to the building of socialism by working outside the home. The nationalist attack on abortion and the reemphasis on the duties of motherhood can, thus, be seen as part of an attack on socialist values (including gender equality), but one that is still driven by collectivist assumptions – that women must act for the good of the collective fist and, only secondarily according to their own needs and desires. (Bracewell, 1996, p. 31)

Although one of the socialist values was gender equality, women were expected to act for the collective good as opposed to individual desires.

Serbian School Experiences

In the countries of former Yugoslavia, schools were public and education was free for all (Jovanovic, 2002). “Collective values predominated even though individual success was valued. Competition existed, but was not emphasized (Jovanovic, Educational para. 1). Each student was required to study a foreign language, sometimes beginning in primary school or even preschool (Jovanovic). The number of male and female students in education was equal, however, females were more likely to graduate with a bachelors or a masters degree than their male counterparts were, yet males were more likely to earn a doctorate degree (Jovanovic). Additionally, women were commonly found in medical, legal, and economic fields (Jovanovic). Serbian
“boys and girls are educated alike, and everyone is free to set career goals to his or her own liking” (Stevanovic, n.d., Employment, para. 2). Perhaps, that is why Serbian women are often found in professions commonly dominated by men, such as medicine and engineering (Milijasevic, 2006; Stevanovic).

**Serbian Immigration to United States**

When Serbs immigrated to other countries, they took with them their traditions and religious practices. Serbian churches were the center of education for Serbian language, customs, and traditions for the children of immigrants. Churches formed summer camps and parish schools (Milijasevic, 2006; Stevanovic, n.d.).

*Early Immigration*

Serbian people have been immigrating to the United States since late 1700s; however, that immigration was small in number. In late 1800s and early 1900s Serbs immigrated from the Ottoman ruled Kosovo and Macedonia (Stevanovic, n.d.). The population was small, and it reduced during WWI when many Serbs went back to their homeland to fight in the war. The largest Serbian immigration wave was between 1880 and 1914 (Stevanovic).

Serbian immigrants were mainly from areas dominated by Austro Hungarian or Turkish Empire. Smaller number of Serbian immigrants came after the two world wars; mainly refugees and displaced persons came after WWII. Immigrants migrating after 1965 did so due to poor living circumstances in Former Yugoslavia. Serbs initially immigrated to the United States with the intent to work and then return home to their families, however, the most recent Serbian immigrants have immigrated to
seek refuge from the war in the Balkans (Stevanovic, n.d.). It is difficult to determine how many early immigrants in the United States are Serbs because all the immigrants were grouped as Yugoslavs. It was estimated that in 1990 there were anywhere from 200,000 to 400,000 Serbian Americans living in the United States (Stevanovic).

Recent Immigration

Much of the research on the three major religious groups from former Yugoslavia has been studied according to the countries each group is associated with. Croats are associated with Croatia, Serbs with Serbia, and Muslims with Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, all the Croats and Serbs who call Bosnia and Herzegovina their home and their ancestral home are left out in this generalization (Lukic & Nikitovic, 2004).

Lukic and Nikitovic (2004) focused their study on Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina who during the civil war have immigrated to Serbia. Dayton Peace Agreement was enacted in 1995 and the Serbian population from Bosnia began their immigration journey to the United States. The Dayton Peace Agreement was initiated in Dayton, Ohio and signed in Paris, France, ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2008; General Framework, 1995-2007). Due to the involvement by the United States in Bosnia and the Refugee Act of 1980 signed by President Jimmy Carter, anyone from Bosnia was allowed to petition for immigration to the United States (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 85% of all refugees from Bosnia
and Herzegovina were of Serbian nationality (cited in Lukic & Nikitovic, 2004). A great number of those refugees were resettled in the United States and in Serbia.

To help immigrants succeed in the United States, many researchers (Chu, 2009; Curtin, 2005; Portes & Rumbout, 2006) have examined the difficulties immigrants face in the new land. Trueba (1993) examined dynamics of cultural transmission among immigrant groups in the United States. He stresses the difficulty of understanding one’s culture, and pointed how understanding another’s culture is even more difficult. He adds that refugees come to the United States for better lives and education for their children. They understand that culturally they are different from mainstream America and often find themselves in cultural shock. That cultural shock occurs from the social change and the ability to understand American values while reconciling with the values of their own culture (Trueba).

Serbs in North America

Natasha Milijasevic (2006) focused her study on second generation Serbs in Canada. She looked at 10, second generation, Serbian-Canadians and their struggles with acculturation and ethnic retention. What Milijasevic found was that these second generation Serbs shared some of the same struggles with acculturating to the new country with many first generation immigrants. They experienced language barriers in school and attended ESL classes until their English was proficient enough for mainstreaming.

Additionally, Milijasevic (2006) found that traditions and religious holidays keep these second generation Serbs connected to their culture. Many Serbian
communities in Canada have developed Saturday school for their second-generation children to learn Serbian language and heritage. The Serbian community in Canada revolved around the church. The parents of these second generation immigrants were afraid that their children were going to lose their Serbian culture and language knowledge that they sometimes forced them into activities such as folklore dancing and even forbade them to make friends with non-Serbs (Milijasevic).

Milijasevic’s (2006) research stated that these second generation immigrants talked about gender in their homes with immigrant parents. They reported that in many households it was the man who has the last word on a decision. The participants in Milijasevic’s study observed and experienced that daughters are not respected as much as sons, yet they are expected to have very successful careers. Parents in Milijasevic’s study placed very high expectations on their children. Females and males were expected to marry a Serbian mate in order to keep Serbian tradition intact. The participants in Milijasevic’s study report that they were expected to become doctors or lawyers so that they wouldn’t suffer the same struggles that their immigrant parents did. Parental expectations were an additional struggle that children of Serbian immigrants faced (Milijasevic; Stevanovic, n.d.).

One of the participants in Milijasevic’s study (2006) explained that a university education for second generation Serbs was not an option; it was a must. One of the participants observed that, “Yugoslavian people tend to really want their children to get a better education than they had, and to progress. They really steer their children towards the professions, like engineering and medicine” (quoted in Milijasevic, 2006,
p. 81). Serbian parental expectations of their daughters and sons do not vary greatly. Both genders are expected to become very educated, yet to preserve culture. Daughters are expected to be as successful as sons (Milijasevic; Stevanovic, n.d.), but are not given as much respect as sons (Milijasevic).

Freeman (1998) studied immigrant women from former Yugoslavia, and their struggles with learning English. She concentrated her study on family dynamics and family member roles and cultures within this specific community. She interviewed Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim women who have been in Canada for less than three years. Some women from Freeman’s study expressed that a man’s role in the family was a protector, and a woman’s role was a care provider. Freeman concludes that women learn English because they want to learn for economic survival, and because ultimately they are empowered to become an equal with their spouse.

Women in Freeman’s (1998) study expressed the differences in gender roles in Yugoslavia compared to Canada. They stated that in Yugoslavia, both women and men worked and grandparents took care of children, however, in Canada, grandparents were not present and women, because they are paid less, are usually forced to quit work and take care of the children. Ultimately, insufficient childcare for this specific population is shown to hinder the education and employment opportunities for Yugoslavian women (Freeman).

Similarly, Bosnian immigrants in California were found to have many barriers to education. Jovanovic’s (2002) study found that lack of time, lack of English, lack of
information, lack of affordable child care, and scheduling public assistance were some of the barriers that immigrants from Bosnia experienced.

Conclusion

Women in the United States have struggled to be accepted into education. They were geared toward education to become mannered, obedient mothers who will educate the next generation of sons (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The potential of young women at this time was not of interest; however, their ability to be good wives, nurturing mothers, and educators of future sons was the primary reason for educating women. When women were finally allowed to go to college and have careers, they again chose their family and motherhood over their personal desires (Fox, 1989).

Just as women born and raised in the United States have struggled with achieving higher education, so do immigrant women. Research reviewed in this chapter has shown significant barriers that affect immigrant students in continuing their education in the United States. The two major barriers include unfamiliarity with the American education system and the insufficient knowledge of the English language. In addition to being faced with obstacles that women today are faced with in the United States, Serbian immigrant women have additional obstacles to overcome (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Milijasevic, 2006). Serbian immigrants are faced with assimilation and acculturation issues as well as culture shock (Trueba, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Furthermore, there are gender issues and struggles in the American culture and the Serbian culture that have an effect on Serbian immigrant women.
Research suggests that Serbian parents set high educational expectations for their children regardless of sex, yet Serbian girls are expected to be mothers and wives (Milijasevic, 2006; Stevanovic, n.d.). The immigrant status, parental expectations, and lack of gender equality in the American education system are only a few obstacles immigrant women encounter in the pursuit of their education.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine and understand the struggles Serbian immigrant women face in their attempt to succeed in the American education system. This chapter outlines and examines the methodology used to understand educational struggles of 10 Serbian immigrant women from Bosnia who have immigrated to the United States after the civil war in former Yugoslavia. This thesis examined parental expectations of these women, familiarity with the American education system, Serbian culture, and gender role dynamics within the Serbian culture.

Two methods of data collection were used in this study. Quantitative data was collected using the survey method, and qualitative data was collected using open-ended questions and the interview method. The participants in this study were asked to fill out a researcher-developed questionnaire. They were asked to complete a survey with multiple choice and open-ended survey questions that focused on parental expectations, familiarity with the American education system, Serbian culture, and gender dynamics in their lives. The survey was analyzed for similarities among the women, and the interviews were recorded and analyzed to find significant themes that could aid educators in meeting the needs of Serbian women. Participants were also interviewed allowing the researcher to gain additional information not gathered from the survey (see Appendix A).
Research Design and Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative research approaches were implemented in this study. “Quantitative research is the collection and analysis of numerical data in order to explain, predict, and/or control phenomena of interests” (Gay et al., 2006, p. 9). Quantitative research is presented using percentages of common answers on a scale. “Qualitative research is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (nonnumerical) data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest” (Gay et al., p. 9). Likert scale was used to gather quantitative data. Likert scale requires “the respondent to self-report along a continuum of choices” (Gay et al., p. 131).

Qualitative research data was collected using a narrative approach when interviewing the participants. Women were asked to fill out two open ended questions. Open-ended questions are important because they permit the researcher to understand the world as seen by the participants (Patton, 2002). Narrative research methods were also used to collect data. “Narrative research is the study of how different humans experience the world around them; it involves a methodology that allows people to tell the stories of their ‘storied lives’” (Gay et al., 2006, p. 14). Each participant was interviewed separately, and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher’s main purpose for narrative research was to discover common themes through the voices of the participants.
Participants

Participants in this study include 10 Serbian immigrant women who have immigrated to the United States between 1995 and 2005. The criteria for participating in the study were: Serbian immigrant females over the age of 18; females who have immigrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1995 and 2005. Research included women who have attempted higher education in the United States and quit, those currently attending school, and those that have graduated with their college/university degree.

The researcher used a snowball effect method to find participants for this study. Women who fit the criteria were asked to identify other women for this study (Krackhardt & Porter, 1986). Each woman was given a consent form to sign to participate in the study (See Appendix B).

All the participants are residents of the Sacramento County and the San Francisco County. Pseudonyms were used in this study to assure confidentiality. Participants’ age ranges from 18 to 47. Six participants reported being married, and four reported being single. Four of the six married women had two children. Four of the 10 participants immigrated at or after the age of 24. Demographics about each participant in the research are shown below (see Table 1).
### Table 1

**Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age/Age at Immigration</th>
<th>Year come to U.S.</th>
<th>Siblings # and Gender</th>
<th>Household chores done by</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Living situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jovana</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2 sisters</td>
<td>Mother mostly</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>With Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maja</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1 sister</td>
<td>Mother mostly</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>With husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcia</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2 sist. 3 broth</td>
<td>Father/sister</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>With husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1 brother</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>With Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3 sisters</td>
<td>Mother Mostly</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>With Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1 brother</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>With Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2 brothers</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>With Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2 sist. 3 broth</td>
<td>Father/sister</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>With Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivana</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1 sist. 1 broth</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>With Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanja</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 brother</td>
<td>Mother mostly</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>W/Roommate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Settings

The research took place at the participants’ home or at the researcher’s home in Sacramento, California. It is important that participants be comfortable sharing their information with the researcher. Having the interviews take place that the participants’ homes or the researcher’s home was one way to ensure comfort for the participants. One participant wanted to participate, but because of conflicting schedules with the researcher she was unavailable for neither a face-to-face interview nor a telephone interview. Instead, she was e-mailed all the necessary documents and interview questions, which she returned promptly.
Research Design and Data Collection

Research data was collected by using a researcher developed survey. Questions one through six consisted of demographic questions. Questions seven to 24 were Likert scale survey questions asking participants to identify the degree of agreement on each statement. The questions were pertinent to: parental expectations, familiarity with the American education system, Serbian culture, and gender dynamics (See Appendix A). Participants were expected to respond to statements such as “I was always expected to do well in school,” and “My gender does not affect how I perform in school,” with response choices ranging from 1 representing “strongly disagree” to 5 representing “strongly agree.”

Questions 25-32 asked the participants about their educational and career background. These questions also asked questions on parental education and careers. They were asked questions such as “Did your mother have a paid job prior to immigrating to the U.S.? If yes, what job?” and “What influenced you to go to college?” Participants were then asked two open ended questions about barriers that keep Serbian women and men from continuing their educational goals.

The last research portion consisted of 16 interview questions with three main underlying themes: Gender dynamics within the family and Serbian culture, experiences with the American education system, and present struggles and choices in education and career (see Appendix C). Participants were asked questions such as “Do you think that your parents treated boys and girls differently?” “Tell me about your first experience with the American education system,” and “Do you think you would
have done better in school if your teachers were more aware of the Serbian culture and parental expectations of Serbian women?"

Procedures

The first step of this study was to identify women already known to the researcher to fit the criteria set for the research. The researcher e-mailed each potential participant a consent letter asking her to participate in this unique and important study. Upon agreement to participate a time was scheduled for a private uninterrupted one hour interview. The researcher met with each participant individually at the participant’s convenience. The participants were given a consent form to sign acknowledging the purpose for the study and the anonymity of their identity.

Once the consent was signed, participants were then asked to complete the researcher developed paper and pen 32 question Likert scale survey, followed by two open-ended paper and pen questions. The participants were instructed to place their finished surveys in an envelope marked “Finished Surveys.” Upon completions of the written portion of data collection, participants were then engaged in a tape-recorded oral interview by the researcher. The researcher ensured to bring up three main topics for discussion: gender within the family and Serbian culture, experiences with the American education system, and present struggles and choices in education and career.

Data collected from the Likert scale survey were analyzed using a percentage ratio, and data collected through narrative research were analyzed for common themes among the participants. In analyzing data through a qualitative research process, “the researcher analyzes the themes and results of the collected data and provides
interpretations of the data” (Gay at al., 2006, p. 401). Upon completion of the interview the participants were given an e-mail address for the purposes of acquiring the results of the study. Additionally, they were asked not to share with anyone any aspects of the study until it is completed.

Summary

The data collected was used to examine and analyze the difficulties faced by Serbian immigrant women in the American education system. The data collected that looked at gender dynamics within the family and Serbian culture, experiences with the American education system, and present struggles and choices in education and career were collected through quantitative and qualitative research methods. The methods used to collect data were sufficient enough to understand the population and issue studied. With the information gathered from the survey, open-ended questions, and the oral interviews, the researcher was able to conclude whether gender dynamics and experiences with the American education system effected education and career choices of the women interviewed. Additionally, the researcher was able to uncover the present struggles and choices in education and career.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This study focuses on 10 Serbian immigrant women and the struggles they encounter in their attempts to pursue higher education in the United States. The intent of this study is to examine thoughts and feelings of these women as they attempt to pursue education, or have succeeded and earned their degree. Also included in this study are the expectations the participants experienced from their parents while growing up, these women’s familiarity with the American education system, and the influences gender inequality in family, culture, and school, has on the women.

This chapter is divided into four sections: one section provides a brief summary of the subjects. Other sections focus on the survey questions and open-ended questions, and themes that have been discovered throughout the interviews. Themes such as cultural and familial expectations, English language barriers that these women face while attempting to pursue their education, money and financial aid, time and familial needs and duties, and gender within family and culture were other topics examined in this study. Furthermore, this chapter presents themes that arose when the participants were asked about Serbian immigrant women’s and men’s barriers. Additional finding were also reported.

Brief Summary of the Participants

Each of the 10 participants was promised anonymity upon agreeing to participate in this research study. To ensure anonymity, participants were given the option to choose a pseudonym. Those that have not chosen a pseudonym were
assigned either an American or a Serbian name. The following section gives a brief summary of each participant and a significant fact about her.

Maja is 25 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 13 years old. Maja has a degree in business administration. She is married and plans to go on to college to pursue her master’s degree in business. Maja is employed in a nontraditional field, information technology, and all her coworkers are men.

Barbara is 24 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 13 years old. Barbara has a degree in business administration, and works in accounting. She is single and lives at home with her parents. She claims that she never talked to her parents about college. It was understood that she would go. Barbara shares that her mother always wanted her to become a doctor.

Jovana is 22 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 12. She lives with her parents. Currently, Jovana is in college deciding the career she will pursue. She wants a career in criminal justice, but might switch to business because of all the risks to women that factor within the profession.

Marcia is 36 year old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 24 years old. She is married and lives with her husband and two children. Marcia wants to become a surveyor since this was her profession prior to immigrating to the United States, but because she has a husband and children to take care of, she has not been able to pursue her professional dream. She is currently a stay at home mom.

Sara is 24 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 13 years old. Sara is single and lives at home with her parents. She remembers many
struggles she had to overcome while acculturating to the American education system. She has a degree in economics, and is currently working in the field of economics.

Amanda is 34 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 24. She is married and lives with her husband and two children. Amanda always wanted to become a teacher, but because the school was too far she pursued design in order to live at home while schooling. Now that she has immigrated to the United States, and has a family, she still wants to become a teacher. Amanda quit school because of English barrier, and is currently a stay at home mom.

Emma is 48 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 35. Emma is married and living with her husband and children. For many years she worked as a head chef in a restaurant prior to immigrating to the United States, but now Emma works as a cook where she is the only female employee. She attempted college in the United States, but quit because of family obligations and the language barriers.

Mary is 39 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 26. Mary is married and living with her husband and two children. She has an Associate of Science degree in nursing. She wants to go back to school and pursue her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in nursing. Mary is currently working long hours at a major hospital and spends as much of her free time with her toddler children. Because of family obligations she is unable to return to school at this time.

Sanja is 18 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was four years old. Sanja is single and living on campus where she is attending school. She
feels pressure from her parents to become a doctor, although that is not what she wants to do. Sanja is currently focusing on her studies and is not working at this time.

Ivana is 28 years old; she immigrated to the United States when she was 19 years old. She is married and living with her husband. Ivana is currently in college pursuing her Associate of Science degree in nursing. Ivana has postponed having children because she wants to wait until she finishes school before she has children. She is currently cleaning houses on the weekends while attending school during the week.

Survey Results

The following section presents the results from the survey questions. The questions were divided into four sections. The first section is statements regarding parental expectations of the 10 women interviewed. The second section corresponds to the familiarity with the American education system and culture. The third section corresponds to the Serbian culture and gender dynamics within the family, and the fourth section corresponds to gender dynamics within education. Each section is represented below using a table.

Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, and 17 pertained to parental expectations. These questions attempted to understand the expectations parents placed on the 10 women interviewed. Ninety percent of the women interviewed feel they were expected to do well in school. However, only 30% claim that a university education was not an option but a must. In addition to being expected to do well in school, 90% of women interviewed reported that they were expected to learn domestic chores (see Table 2).
Table 2

_Statements Regarding Parental Expectations of the 10 Women Interviewed_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree/Strong Agree (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
<th>Disagree/Strong Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. I was always expected to do well in school.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am/was expected to marry a Serbian man.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If my parents are happy, I am happy.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. For me, a university education was not an option, it was a must.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Growing up, I was expected to learn domestic chores.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*S.* = Strongly

Questions 11, 18, 19, 21, and 22 pertained to the American culture and to the familiarity with the American education system. These questions looked to understand participants’ understanding and comfort with the culture they immigrated into, and the knowledge of educational resources. While 60% of the participants feel comfortable in the American education system, only half of the participants feel that they fit in with the American culture. Additionally, 50% feel conflicted between the American and Serbian cultures and 20% are undecided (see Table 3).
Table 3

**Familiarity with the American Education System and Culture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree/S. Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree/S. Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. I feel comfortable in the American education system</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I feel that I fit in with the American culture</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I do not feel conflicted between the American and Serbian cultures.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I received college counseling in high school/prior to college entrance.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I was aware of financial aid prior to entering college/university.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*S.= Strongly

Questions 13, 14, 23, and 24 pertained to Serbian culture and gender within the family. Half of the participants reported that there is a gender role difference in their family, and 70% of the participants agreed that men and women can do the same job equally well, while the remaining 30% disagreed. When asked about the culture, half of the participants wished their instructors had an understanding of the Serbian culture, and 40% were undecided on the subject. Additionally, when asked about their classmates 40% of the participants wished that their classmates had an understanding
of the Serbian culture, and the remaining 60% were undecided on the subject (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Serbian Culture and Gender Dynamics within the Family*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree/S. Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree/S. Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. There is a gender role difference in my family.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Men and women can do the same job equally well.</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I would like my instructor to have an understanding of my culture.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I wish my classmates had an understanding of my culture.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*S.= Strongly

Questions 12, 15, 16, and 20 pertained to gender dynamics within education. These questions attempted to understand participants’ thoughts on the effects of gender on education. All of the women surveyed agreed that gender does not affect how they perform in school. Additionally, when asked to respond to the statement, “My career opportunities are limited because I am a woman,” 60% strongly disagreed, and 10% were undecided, while 30% agreed, indicating that gender does have an effect on the choices Serbian women make in education and career (see Table 5).
Table 5

*Gender Dynamics Within Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree/S. Agree (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
<th>Disagree/S. Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. My gender does not affect how I perform in school.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I struggle with a male instructor.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I struggle with a female instructor.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. My career opportunities are limited because I am a woman.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*S.= Strongly

Open-ended Questions

Participants were asked two open ended questions pertaining to what they feel is keeping Serbian women and men from earning higher education in the United States (see Appendix D). The findings presented show why women who participated feel that Serbian women differ in educational success in the United States when compared to Serbian men. Ten Serbian women surveyed gave their own interpretations to the questions, “What barriers do you feel are keeping Serbian women from continuing educational goals?” The answers present three recurring themes: familial obligations and lack of time, language barriers, and financial needs. The same 10 women were
asked “What barriers do you feel are keeping Serbian men from continuing educational goals?” Two themes emerged from the question: men are breadwinners, and role assumptions affected by gender.

**Serbian Women’s Barriers**

*Familial obligations/lack of time.* The women interviewed for this study overwhelmingly stated familial obligations and lack of time as two of the most important reasons why they quit school or had trouble pursuing school. Emma confirms the one reason why women have challenges staying in school. She states, “Serbian women come to the U.S. to have a better life, that includes a better life for their children first then themselves.” Women like Emma feel that family and children are more important than personal enrichment like continuing with their education. Marcia writes,

> If you come or started you family here it is even more hard. You would like to spend some time with family. It is possible to reach your wishing level of education if you are able to pay your bills without going to work or having your spouse earn enough money for living and also having kids in school, doing homework with them, volunteering in schools as this is very important in this country. Our kids also like to be included in different activities like sports, music, etc.

*Language barriers.* In addition to familial obligations and lack of time, language barriers are another reoccurring theme why Serbian women don’t pursue higher education in the United States. Ivana states “English is the most important
reason why many women don’t go to college. They are embarrassed of their accent and feel that other people-native to English- know more than they do.” Maja adds her own interpretation of how the language barriers stop many Serbian women from going to school and earning a college education.

Other married women might have kids and unlike some women here in the U.S. they don’t want to take their kids to daycare centers but they want to give their kids the best care they can, sacrificing their education. In order to continue your education you have to learn the language and that takes time that some women might not have. Some woman might think that she has work, home, kids, husband, she wants to go to school and get a higher education but she doesn’t speak the language well enough, has no time to put aside to learn the language because she has to work, has to take care of the kids and so forth.

Financial needs. Eight of the 10 women interviewed named financial need as a reason for keeping Serbian immigrant women from continuing educational goals. Amanda states, “I have to take care of my kids and I don’t have enough time for school. I have to work to earn a living.” Emma talked about the importance of financial needs for Serbian immigrant women like her, and explained that although she attempted to manage her time with family and learn English, the need for money was greater than the desire for education. She states,

Many Serbian womens taking care of family. They would rather work and help their kids, let them go to school and have better life in future. For me, it was too hard to go to school and work because my English was poor and I couldn’t
make it both at the same time. I went to school and kept my job to support my kids.

Because of financial needs, Emma was forced to quit school and work as many hours as possible to provide for her family.

Serbian Men’s Barriers

When the same women were asked, “What barriers do you feel are keeping Serbian men from continuing educational goals? Two themes emerged from this question: men are breadwinners and role assumption affected by gender. All the women provided an answer related to finances and gender stereotyped views regarding men and earning money. Barbara added, “...I feel as though Serbian women are a lot more willing to obtain a higher education than Serbian men are.”

Men are breadwinners. The overwhelming response to what barriers keep Serbian men from continuing education included phrases such as, “support family,” “need to provide for family,” or “earn a living.” Sanja writes, “The pressure to earn money, support the family and compete with the other fella’s on cool gadgets. They might also feel that their capability of speaking the English language isn’t good enough to compete with others in college, etc.”

Maja also pointed out that,

They think they have to support their family and having a job is their priority.
They feel they are the only supporter in an economical sense and can’t go to school because they have to work. They think if they have a good paying job,
why go to school. They make good money school is not necessary or important.”

Amanda’s response was very similar, she stated, “They have to work to earn a living…”

Role assumptions affected by gender. The second theme concentrates mainly on the role assumptions Serbian women feel that their male counterparts are embracing and are keeping them from soaring educationally. The women used phrases such as “not interested,” “need to have ‘manly jobs,’” “pressure to earn money,” and “ego, proud of their manhood.”

Sara states, “Part of it is the Serbian mentality that guys need to have ‘manly’ jobs, which makes them believe it is OK not to go to college.” Barbara adds, “Their ego. Serbian men are too proud of their manhood; they feel like they need to provide as soon as they can and don’t really think in the long run. They’d rather have ‘a job’ rather than work on their futures to build a career.”

Survey questions revealed no gender differences in educational barriers for Serbian immigrant women, however, the open-ended questions revealed many gender specific barriers. Women, as expected, were associated with taking care of family, and men were associated with providing for the family.

Interview Questions

Each participant was interviewed one-on-one, and the interviews lasted for about an hour. Interview questions focused on gender dynamics within the family and Serbian culture, experiences with the American education system, and present
struggles and choices in education and career. From the questions focusing on these specific topics, several themes emerged. The themes emerged were cultural and familial expectations, English language barriers, money and financial aid, time and familial needs and duties, and gender roles within family and culture.

*Cultural and Familial Expectations*

The women interviewed shared the expectations their parents had of them when they were younger. Marcia talked about learning domestic chores, “We were teached to cook to clean to know how to take care of our selves, by like preparing for school by taking care of our clothes, organizing our stuff and also helping in the house, not only backyard and stuff.” Barbara talked about the career she wanted to pursue versus what her mom expected of her,

> When I was really young like six or seven years old I loved singing like every 6 or 7 year old I wanted to be a singer but I mean when I was like in my early teens I just always knew I would go to college, but I never really thought about [what I wanted to become] … my mom wanted me to be a doctor (laughing) wishful thinking. But they never told me what to do, I don’t think we ever talked about it to tell you the truth, but I mean yeah, we didn’t have conversations like that. Those are way too mature, it did involve like “Barbara get in your room and do your homework.” Those are way too mature to be talking about with your kids, if they did they certainly never communicated that to me I mean my mom always wished I would be a doctor. They were never too serious about it.
As Marcia and Barbara both explain, their parents put high expectations on them both domestically and educationally.

*English Language Barriers*

The women interviewed spoke of one very big obstacle to their education. Marcia talked about her first experience with the American education system,

I knew maybe 10 sentences, that’s all. And I had also had hard time when I came here I had hard time to understand them so even though I knew that people spoke a little fast here so I was not able always to understand what I really knew. I had hard time at first to enter in to find better jobs and also to understand a lot of paperwork to fill out write and do stuff.

Barbara also remembered her language struggles,

I was in eight grade, San Francisco, I was thirteen years old, I spoke no English, but I thought it was easy as soon as learned English obviously. Because I had a base education from Bosnia form Serbia whatever that certainly helped me do well in school and helped me fit in maybe not in English or social science or you know the things that required knowledge of English right away but classes like math or like classes like that. And then throughout, I think throughout and for the rest of my eight grade and throughout high school I think that base helped me but I think as I learned how to communicate in English and how to understand English and speak it I think I found it to be pretty easy, at least throughout high school.
Mary states:

I had no English taught. My first day in the school it was actually just for adults and my sister took me there and I asked her to stay with me. She said well I can’t you are 26 and it’s not ok if I stay with you. Then I said no no please don’t leave me because I have no idea what they are talking about. I literally didn’t know to say when they ask me “What’s your name” I couldn’t answer, because I had no idea what they are talking about, so she said I’ll stay with you, and she stayed all day 8 hours with me in the classroom, and the next day I came by myself. And I did enroll in ESL classes, I would say about few months and I had to finish certain level to you know to get to the point to enroll in some more classes for my degree.

Sara talks about her barriers with English all throughout high school, although she immigrated to the U.S. when she was thirteen years old,

In 5th grade in Bosnia I was taking an English class. I knew how to say the basics, what is your name? How are you, and so on. I experienced huge language barrier in the United States and I hate it, every part of it. I was enrolled in ESL class until 10th grade of high school.

Money and Financial Aid

Money issues and barriers was a reoccurring theme in open-ended questions as well as interviews. Marcia spoke about money issues for mothers:

Some mothers can not go in school because of the financial situation, they are not able to pay everything so maybe just in that case they gonna be, it gonna be
easier for them to go back in school if state is able to pay for those mothers to go back to school.

Mary explained her financial situation when she first arrived to the states,
I want to say, when I came here I started working full time and then I was going part time for English classes, it was four days a week and then I would do my homework during the weekend and then I was doing a part time job catering on Friday night and Saturday nights so it was like struggling with just monthly expenses and earning for day in and day out and on top of that trying to learn English. So money are the big things even I got some financial support from college just being good student and stuff like that I think that’s the big thing. People have to work full time and then whatever is left and you don’t have much energy in 24 hours and then when I entered the [nursing] program I started part time and I got credit and working and I started going to school full time. They would love to get education but they have to concentrate on getting money and you know making sure that kids are fine and they are going to school and they are you supported financially, and you don’t have enough for everybody. I was in just different situation, I was by myself and could concentrate on that.

When Jovana was asked what her biggest struggle was in acquiring higher education she said,
The only things like language maybe and the money situation, that’s the only things that’s a barrier. I don’t think it’s that hard. Right now, probably money,
‘cuz it’s really expensive and I have to keep going to a community college ‘cuz it’s way cheaper and you can get your AA degree there, then get the other stuff at somewhere else.

*Time and Familial Needs and Duties*

Marcia talks about the difficulties of Serbian women with children to succeed educationally in the United States,

It is much easier when you come here as a younger without families, but in my situation with kids its very hard when you have to pay attention that your kids grow healthy and that you make sure that you provide everything for them, its make much more harder. So if you are younger and without kids I believe it’s much easier than with kids.

Mary agrees with Marcia and states,

I came with kind of different, I didn’t have any kids, I wasn’t married, I was by myself, it was a little bit different then probably a woman who would come with children and even if she would like to go to school probably, it’s you know the last thing in life. You know getting kids to school, getting work, you know just basic things. So I think it’s hard for Serbian women with families I think its hard coming to the United States and just start either education or anything ‘cuz of other things they have to do that they are expected to do. Even now, I have two kids and I’m not still able to go back to school ‘cuz it’s another additional few hours that I have to take from them for you know homework and stuff so it’s hard.
Emma added her struggles with time and family, “I was working five days a week and going to school the sixth day for eight hours. It was too much for me because I have two kids going to school, a husband, and I was working. I had to take care of the home, cook and clean. I decided that school is less important than the family.”

*Gender within Family and Culture*

Another reoccurring theme was gender within family and culture. When asked if the Serbian community treats boys and girls differently Barbara answered,

Yeah, I think so I don’t know really how but I don’t know, I feel that girls were being raised to do certain tasks and boys were being raised to provide for the family. I don’t know I guess things have changed in the last 20 years but I would say yes. Serbian community in my opinion is a bit sexist. But then again things have changed a lot, but Serbian I think is a bit sexist. Men are being treated or boys are being taught to be strong and to provide for family and get married and have kids, and go out and have a job. Women are being raised, I guess the girls that are raised here are raised differently, the Serbian Americans are raised differently form Serbian girls.

Sara, as all the other participants stated, “I don’t think my parents treat boys or girls differently.” However, she does believe that the Serbian community treats boys and girls differently. “Although, there are ‘believes’ that make boys more ‘important.’ For example, on Christmas day boys are always more welcome to be your first
guests.” In her family, Sara shares that a “male is expected to walk in your house first, for good luck during the New Year.”

Sanja also agreed in view with Barbara and Sara stating,

Yeah, definitely, boys are usually supposed to be more masculine and have like more important jobs and girls are supposed to stay home and cook and clean and give birth to bunch of children (laughing). Not that stereotypical anymore but still like there is like more basic view.

When asked about gender effects on career choices, Jovana explained how being female has effected her career choice.

I did wanna be in like criminal justice but that’s not like you know if I have kids and husband and you know. And it’s like it’s like different if you are a guy, and you still have like those responsibilities but like you know, if you are a girl you get pregnant and they shoot you and I don’t know it’s more stressful.

Additional Findings

All of the participants reported that they celebrate both Serbian and American holidays. They also reported that it is important for them that their children learn about the Serbian culture and traditions.

Sara states,

For Serbian students, as for all other students, it is important to know what options, opportunities, they have. It is important to educate them on financial aid, part time jobs, what classes to take to graduate on time, where to get help for subject they are struggling with etc. Most of the time students give up
because they do not know how to overcome the struggle they are facing.

Every challenge has a solution and it is important to educate students to seek help when they need it instead of giving up.

When asked who was the most influential when it came to choosing her career, Jovana responded,

Probably my mom and dad. My dad, cuz he was always “you want to earn your own money” (in a strong Serbian accent) Blah blah blah go to school don’t be like me that you have to do physical work you know. He said “you need to sit in a chair all day and” (laughing). Yeah I’m still umm undecided with what I wanna do, I think I’m just gonna go to business and that’s what I wanted to do and then it kinda like goes with what he wanted to do cuz there isn’t much lifting.

Each participant was asked to share the education level of her parents. They were also asked to share the education level of their significant other if they have one. Additionally, they were asked to report their own education level. The findings indicate a gender difference in the education level of participants’ parents. Six of the 10 participants have a father who earned a higher education than the mother. The remaining four sets of parents earned the same level of education. Participants’ education level was compared to the education level of their significant other. Three participants reported not having a significant other. Four participants have a higher education level than their significant other. One participant has the same level of
education as her significant other, and two participants have less education than their significant other. The results are presented below (see Table 6).

Table 6

\[ \text{Education Level} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age/Age at immigration</th>
<th>Mother’s Education level</th>
<th>Father’s Education level</th>
<th>Own education level</th>
<th>Significant other’s education level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jovana</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>In college</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maja</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>B.S. High school degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcia</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>Some college 8th grade completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>2 years completed</td>
<td>B.S. and B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>A.S. M.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5-8 years</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>B.S. PhD in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>Some college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>Some college High school diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivana</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>In college High school diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanja</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Beyond 4 year degree</td>
<td>Beyond 4 year degree</td>
<td>In college N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings discovered through quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The 10 women who participated in this study expressed their voices through three methods: survey questions, open-ended questions, and interview questions. Although the number of participants was relatively small, the researcher was able to gather valuable information and understand the voices of women interviewed. The themes found in this study uncover the struggles women face in acquiring higher education in the United States. Additionally, the researcher was
able to understand why many Serbian women have decided to quit their pursuit of higher education in the United States.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study examined the struggles of 10 Serbian immigrant women as they adjusted to life in California after immigrating. This study specifically analyzed the struggles Serbian immigrant women face in their attempts to pursue higher education in the United States. Additionally, gender dynamics within the family, culture, and education are explored and their influences on Serbian women’s choices in pursuit of higher education. This chapter will present the discussion of this research. It will also present the conclusions drawn from the experiences of conducting this study, and the limitations experienced. Additionally, suggestions for further research will be made.

Discussion

Themes noted in this study were found through three methods of data collection, survey questions, open-ended questions, and interview questions. Each method of data collection found similar themes. The researcher looked to understand two major questions, “What are the struggles in achieving higher education for Serbian immigrant women?” and “What is it that educators need to know about Serbian women to make their educational experiences more fulfilling and successful?”

Survey Questions

Survey questions concentrated on four areas, parental expectations, familiarity with the American education system and culture, Serbian culture and gender within family, and gender dynamics within education. The 10 Serbian women interviewed
revealed that their parents expected them to do well in school, and they also expected them to be domestic. These findings are congruent with the findings by Milijasevic (2006). These findings indicate that Serbian women were raised in environments that value education and they are likely to value education. The study findings also indicate that Serbian women are familiar with the American education system and financial aid services available to those who qualify. However, while most participants feel comfortable in the American education system, half of the participants reported feeling conflicted between the two cultures. These findings are similar to what Trueba (1993) found; immigrants are often conflicted between their own cultures and the culture they immigrated to. These findings show that Serbian women are not as comfortable in the American education system as they should be, and that could be an influential reason why some of them do not succeed educationally in this country.

Additionally, the results of this study indicate that none of the participants believe that their gender effects how they perform in school, however, almost one third (30%) of the participants believe that their career opportunities are limited because they are women. These findings indicate that the women believe they can do any school work given, regardless of their gender, however, some of them believe that because of their gender, they had to choose a specific career over another. This was evident in Jovana’s situation. She wanted to go into criminal justice, but backed out because being a woman she plans to get pregnant one day. She felt that because of the dangers involved with the career, she is better off doing something else.
Open-ended Questions

The participants were asked two open-ended questions. They were asked to answer what barriers they thought keep Serbian women and men from continuing educational goals. Three themes were found as barriers for Serbian immigrant women in continuing their educational goals, familial obligations/lack of time, language barriers, and financial needs. The same findings were reported by Jovanovic (2002). Two themes were found when participants were asked about barriers that Serbian men face when attempting to continue educational goals: men are breadwinners, and role assumptions affected by gender. Serbian women who participated in this study overwhelmingly gave the same answers as found by Freeman (1998). Women are seen as caretakers and men are viewed as providers and protectors of the family.

Interview Questions

The interview questions revealed several themes that were found in the survey section and the open-ended questions section of the study. The reoccurring themes found during the interview portion of this study are cultural and familial expectations, English language barriers, money and financial aid, time and familial needs and duties, and gender within family and culture. Additional findings were also presented in the previous chapter capturing interesting findings reported by some, but not the majority of the participants.

Through the interview process, the participants were able to express their side of the story on each question asked. They were able to interpret the questions in their own ways and respond and explain their answers. When asked about family and
expectations, the women revealed that their families placed high expectations on them. They were expected to learn domestic chores and to perform them. Additionally, the women were also expected to succeed educationally. They were expected to become doctors, to make a lot of money, and also to do well on the domestic front. These findings suggest that the pressure to do well in school helped Serbian women want to succeed educationally.

The participants reported English language or lack of English language as one of the most common barriers to success. These findings are parallel to the findings of Erisman and Looney (2007), Milijasevic (2006), Freeman (1998), and Jovanovic (2002). Only 3 of the 10 women studied have actually completed their education and earned their degree. The remaining seven are either still working toward their degrees at community colleges or have quit school. The findings from this study concur with the findings by Crisostomo and Dee (2001). Crisostomo and Dee reported that the ESL students attend community colleges and many do not continue education at four-year universities. Six of the 10 women studied attended community college. Three of those six quit school, one earned her Associate Degree, and the remaining two are still working toward their degrees. None of the six women went on to a University.

In addition to English language as a barrier for these women to succeed educationally, this study revealed that money and financial aid was another barrier for Serbian women to reach their educational goals. Money was repeatedly quoted as a major barrier to education. Some participants mentioned that they make too much money to qualify for financial aid, yet not enough to pay for school. The women
interviewed repeatedly spoke of a cycle they are in regarding school, family, and work. They want to go to school and earn a degree, yet many of them came to this country when they were a bit older and struggled with English. Many also came to this country with a husband and children, or had children soon after immigrating. This resulted in working to support their family instead of educating themselves. Also, many Serbian women chose to take care of their children instead of placing them in childcare. Similar findings were reported in studies by Jovanovic (2002) and Freeman (1998). They found that due to the lack of affordable childcare, and because grandparents are usually not around to take care of the kids, women are forced to quit work and care for the children.

Time and familial needs and duties were a major barrier for many Serbian women, especially those with children. Emma chose to take care of her family instead of go to school because she felt that her family is more important to her. Similarly to Emma, Marcia is a stay at home mom who plans to go to school eventually, however, for now she chose to take care of her family instead of placing her children in childcare. These findings suggest that Serbian women are very ambitious and value education greatly because they each wish to return to school one day, yet they are also placing their family over themselves. They view themselves as care takers of the family and feel that it is one role they need to fulfill first and foremost before they go on to satisfying their own educational needs.
Unexpected Findings

The open-ended questions in the research were initially developed to aid in the search for barriers that women face when attempting to pursue their educational goals in the American education system. “What barriers do you feel are keeping Serbian women from continuing educational goals?” was the primary question. “What barriers do you feel are keeping Serbian men from continuing educational goals?” was asked to add to the primary question in the study. However, the responses led to unexpected findings. Contrary to the findings through the survey method, which revealed no gender role specific struggles, or gender role differences within culture or family, the open-ended question method revealed unexpected findings. The answers were very gender role specific. The women who participated in the study revealed that their main barriers besides English language and financial need are lack of childcare, and for men, these women named need to provide for the family and role assumptions affected by gender.

Conclusions

The findings from this study are the data collected from the Likert scale questionnaire, two open-ended questions and the interview the researcher conducted and recorded. The intent of this study was to understand the struggles and barriers that Serbian immigrant women face in their attempts to achieve higher education in the United States. Hopefully, the findings of this study will aid educators in better understanding this unique population, and will help Serbian immigrant women better understand the struggles they are facing and possibly identify methods through which
the struggles could be minimized or overcome. Additionally, it is the hope of this researcher to ignite further research ideas into those who take it upon themselves to read the findings of this study.

The researcher began this study with two questions she wanted to further explore and understand: What barriers keep Serbian immigrant women from achieving their educational goals? The question was answered through the three methods of collecting data and the questions asked within those methods. The second question: what is it that these Serbian immigrant women want educators to know to help them succeed in education? This question was not answered through the various methods used to collect data.

The 10 Serbian women interviewed each enlightened the researched with her own story and experiences repeatedly mentioning the struggles and barriers faced throughout the tough educational journey that each woman experienced. When each woman was asked to identify what educators need to know to help women succeed educationally, each woman replied that educators can not help with any of the major barriers. Each woman expressed that, regardless of what educators know about Serbian women and their culture, there is nothing that can be done by the educators to help in overcoming the major barriers. When asked to elaborate on this response, they simply stated that educators have so much work already, knowing the background of every person in the classroom will not add to the success of each student, but take away from the primary goal for the year. This is an unexpected finding.
The findings from this study indicate that there were subgroups within the women studied. The most obvious group is, all the women who fit the criteria for this study: Serbian immigrant women who immigrated to this country after 1995. Within that particular group were women who immigrated before the age of 13 (50%), and after the age of 19 (50%). The two groups varied in their struggles. Those who immigrated after the age of 19 have all but Ivana quit school and concentrated on taking care of their family. Ivana is still in school and attempting to earn her degree. Another sub group were women who had children (40%) and those who did not have any children (60%). The struggles also varied for these women. Participants who had children stated time and familial obligations as one of the main reasons for quitting school, as compared to women without children who reported English language and financial need as the main barriers. None of the four women with children earned a four year degree, and half of the women without children earned a four year degree.

Most participants emphasized that there were no gender differences within their family, that gender did not play a role in their lives, yet when they answered each question, gender, subconsciously or not, was a major reason for the way they answered their questions. According to the women interviewed in this study, they view themselves and other women and caretakers of the family, and they view Serbian men as the providers for the family. When they were asked to name the barriers keeping Serbian women from continuing educational goals, the women responded with familial obligations and lack of time. The women viewed themselves and other Serbian women as obligated to their family, and responsible to spend time with the
family, concluding that gender roles have an impact on Serbian women’s lives. Gender is a factor in the lives of women, yet these participants were oblivious to the effects of gender on their lives.

Additionally, when asked the same question about men, all the women’s responses depicted men as the breadwinners. The “need to provide for the family” and “support the family” were quotes that majority of the participants used to answer the question. These responses indicate that the Serbian immigrant women view men as the breadwinners and themselves as the caretakers of the family confirming Freedman’s (1998) findings.

Limitations

Many of the limitations to this study were foreseen. Availability of all the participants was very difficult. More gender specific questions could have been asked of the participants to better understand if they comprehend how much affect gender actually has on their lives. The study found that gender plays a role in the way that women see themselves and men around them. The study also revealed that gender roles within the family, as perceived by the women in this study, play a huge role in the reason why many of the Serbian women not continue their education.

When this researcher first began thinking about this study, she thought about people like herself and the struggles she overcame. She was not thinking about the other population of Serbian immigrant women. The women who immigrated in their late teens and later, those that had a family to think about, and children to raise as they are attempting to pursue their degree. Future research should focus mainly on Serbian
immigrant women who immigrated in their 20s and 30s with a family and children. The struggles and barriers might dramatically differ from those of women who immigrated younger than 13 years old. The three women that earned their university degrees immigrated to the United States at the age of 13.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, recommendations for further research can be made. This research only touched on Serbian immigrant women’s struggles in achieving higher education. Further research is necessary to find a richer understanding into this unique population. Future research might focus on Serbian immigrant men and their struggles in achieving educational goals in the United States. This research found that most women in this study are involved with men who have less education than they are. Further research may focus on reasons why Serbian immigrant women chose to be involved with Serbian immigrant men who in fact mainly have less education than themselves.

Reflections

As a Serbian immigrant woman who has immigrated to this country at the age of twelve, I have had many obstacles and barriers on the path to my educational success. I have gone through the obstacles and barriers and earned my degree, and have forgotten some of the troubles I experienced on my journey. However, as I listened to the women who participated in this study tell me their stories and experiences with gender dynamics and immigrant woman struggles, I find myself reminiscing as well as surprised. I encountered language barriers and never thought
about any other obstacles. I was expected to study hard and earn good grades at school. At home I was expected to care for myself. I was never forced to be domestic; in fact, my parents stressed education as the priority in my life. They wanted me to be successful and independent.

When the participants in this study talked about raising a family, learning the language, working, and going to school at the same time, I was amazed at how much ambition and determination these women have. They are brave women who are attempting to conquer their dreams. I wanted to study this particular group because of my personal connection with this particular population and because I never believed that gender dynamics within family or culture exist among Serbian people in this day and age. However, I was surprised to find out that the women interviewed do in fact experience the effects of gender role assumptions. Their thoughts about their own roles and the roles of Serbian men in their lives show the effects of gender on Serbian women and culture.
APPENDIX A

Survey Questions
Survey Questions

Dear Participant,

Thank you for choosing to take part in this research study. All information provided on this survey will be kept strictly confidential.

Please answer the following Demographic questions.

1. Age_________

2. Name ___________________ (Optional)         Pseudo name ______________________

3. Marital Status: Married Single

4. How old were you when you immigrated to the U.S.?____________

5. Do you have any siblings? Number and gender. _____________________________

6. What is your level of education?
   Not a high school graduate High school graduate Some college In college
   BA/BS in_______________ Master’s Degree in ________________ Ph.D. in ____________

The questions in this scale ask you about your parents’ expectations of you and your feelings about the American education system. Please answer each question as truthfully as possible and to the best of your abilities. For each question choose from the following alternatives:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1 = Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 = Disagree</th>
<th>3 = Undecided</th>
<th>4 = Agree</th>
<th>5 = Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I was always expected to do well in school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I am/was expected to marry a Serbian man.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If my parents are happy, I am happy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>For me, a university education was not an option, it was a must.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I feel comfortable in the American education system.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>My gender does not affect how I perform in school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>There is a gender role difference in my family.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Men and women can do the same job equally well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I struggle with a male instructor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I struggle with a female instructor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Growing up, I was expected to learn domestic chores.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I feel that I fit in with the American culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I do not feel conflicted between the American and Serbian cultures.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>My career opportunities are limited because I am a woman.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I received college counseling in high school/prior to college entrance.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I was aware of financial aid prior to entering college/university.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I would like my instructor to have an understanding of my culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I wish my classmates had an understanding of my culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please answer the following questions by circling the appropriate response.

25. What influenced you to go/not go to college?
   - My choice
   - Parents’ choice
   - I had no choice
   - Grades not good enough
   - I didn’t go because of monetary reasons
   - Other _______________________________

26. Do/did you work while in school?  No  Part-time  Full-time

27. Growing up, who in your house performed household chores?
   - Mother
   - Mother mostly
   - Equally Mother and Father
   - Father mostly
   - Father
   - Other _______________________________

   *Parental Education:*

28. Mother:
   - 0-4 years
   - 5-8 years
   - 8 completed
   - trade school
   - some college
   - 2 year degree
   - 4 year degree
   - beyond 4 years

29. Father:
   - 0-4 years
   - 5-8 years
   - 8 completed
   - trade school
   - some college
   - 2 year degree
   - 4 year degree
   - beyond 4 years

30. Did your mother have a paid job prior to immigrating to the U.S.? If yes, what job?
   - No
   - Yes _____ _______________________________

31. What is your husband’s/boyfriend’s level of education?
   - Not a high school graduate
   - High school graduate
   - Some college
   - In college
   - BA/BS
   - Masters Degree
   - Ph.D.
   - N/A

32. What is your living situation?
   - With parents
   - With husband
   - With significant other
   - With roommate
   - Alone
APPENDIX B

Consent to Participate as a Research Subject
Consent to Participate as a Research Subject

My name is Mirjana Cvjetkovic and I am a graduate student in the Masters of Arts in Education and Behavioral Sciences (Gender Equity) program at California State University, Sacramento. You are being asked to participate in a study that examines the struggles Serbian immigrant women face in their journey to achieve higher education. Your participation involves filling out a questionnaire, answering two open ended questions, and an oral interview that will take approximately two hours of your time.

Your confidentiality will be completely protected and you will have the opportunity to choose an American name to be referred by in the finalized report of this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation at any time, or choose to only answer questions that you are comfortable answering without penalty.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you would like to know the results of this study please do not hesitate to contact me at MirjanaC@comcast.net after November 2009. Thank You.

______________________    __________________________
Signature        Date
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions
Interview Questions

1. Do you think that your parents treated boys and girls differently? What about the Serbian community?
2. Is it important to you and your family to continue Serbian culture and traditions?
3. Does your family celebrate Serbian holidays? What about American holidays?
4. When you were younger, how much freedom were you allowed? Did you participate in school activities (school dances, extracurricular activities, etc.)?
5. When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up? Did you have your family’s support?
6. Did you grow up with an expectation to be educated? Be domestic? Bear children?
7. Tell me about your first experience with the American education system.
8. How much English did you speak prior to immigrating to the U.S.? Did you experience any language barriers in school? Were you enrolled in ESL classes?
9. How familiar were you with the American education system (ex. Grading, college prep, extracurricular activities, etc.)?
10. Did your parents’ expectations for your future conflict with those of your teachers’?
11. Were you permitted to go to school of your choice? What about your siblings?
12. Who was most influential when it came to choosing your career? Were you able to pursue the career of your choice? Do you think your gender affected your career choice? Do you plan to go back to school?
13. What does being a Serbian immigrant woman mean to you?
14. Do you feel that you have/had to overcome many obstacles to earn your diploma? What was your biggest struggle in acquiring your education?
15. Do you think you would have done better in school if your teachers were more aware of the Serbian culture and parental expectations of Serbian women?
16. What do you think is important for educators to know about Serbian students or culture to ensure that they do better in school?
APPENDIX D

Barriers for Men and Women
Barriers for Men and Women

Please respond to the following questions.

1. What barriers do you feel are keeping Serbian women from continuing educational goals?

2. What barriers do you feel are keeping Serbian men from continuing educational goals?
REFERENCES


