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A qualitative study of a story of a foreign-born woman serving in a leadership position in higher education in the United States using narrative inquiry

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF A STORY OF A FOREIGN-BORN WOMAN SERVING IN A
LEADERSHIP POSITION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES USING
NARRATIVE INQUIRY

by

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and the School of Education, George Fox University

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There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land.

Euripides (484-406 BC)

Abstract

This qualitative study investigated what it means for a foreign-born woman to serve as leader in a higher education institution in western United States. The desired outcome of the study rendered using narrative inquiry as the appropriate method for data gathering and analysis. The premise that the immigration process, although often portrayed with a negative connotation, may bring about positive outcomes and even high levels of success, led to a very meticulous participant identification process. The participant for this study was chosen from among eight other potential participants found across the entire United States. Initial demographic questions were used to locate a participant with a rich background to ascertain a vibrant story. The identified participant arrived in the United States first as a child, then returned to her home country, and arrived in the United States again later, holding a doctoral degree in medicine. The participant's personal narrative reveals a common thread through self-reported experiences and events and their effects on her higher education professional and personal choices through life. Her focus and a need to take upon herself the highest level of responsibilities supported with her own background, family, and motherhood paved the path of success. The connectivity and dependability between career and family life was suggested. Analysis and interpretation include acceptance of duality as a way of life and using foreignness as an advantage.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Every year, thousands of immigrants enter the United States. They arrive illegally or legally under different immigration status, and with different hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Although there are many variations among immigration populations and successive generations as well, we can safely assume that all of them are looking for a certain level of success. For some, that might be the ability to provide for their family, and for others that might be the freedom to start an entrepreneurial venture. Moreover, for some that may be serving in postsecondary institutions preparing adults for the world that is yet to come.

It is this last group that is the focus of this research: foreign-born women in postsecondary institutions. Traditionally, the main body of research has been devoted to assimilation of the immigration population as a whole. Extensive research reveals reasons why they came (Thompson, 1999), the ethnic composition (Clark, 2007), the age differences (United States Bureau of the Census Report, 1993), their educational attainments (Chiswick & DebBurman, 2004), and their participation in the workforce and economy (Borjas, 1994). Significant research has been dedicated to men, discussing their role in the economy and their different levels of success. Children and youth are being studied to learn how society can help them to assimilate into the native culture.

The topic of women immigrants and their concerns still offers significant opportunity for research. The research community owes some serious interest to women, mainly in areas of high success and leadership, yet very little research has been conducted on educated immigrants, especially those serving as faculty members or as administrators in higher education institutions

in the United States. The topic is even more uncommon when considering women born outside of the United States.

This narrative study through storytelling investigated moving forces behind the success of foreign-born women. Many women enter the United States, but only a few of them end up serving in a leadership position in an institution of higher education. My intention is to try to understand what it means to be a foreign-born woman in that position.

The challenge surfaces when studying the topic of immigration. As researchers are studying different topics within the immigration population, the terms *immigrant*, *foreign-born*, *refugee*, and *first-generation immigrant* are often used interchangeably. This may result in difficulties when attempting comparative and detailed analysis.

Immigration as a social issue has a significant impact on the United States economy and education. Some research has suggested that if the trend continues, by 2040 one third of American children will have at least one foreign-born parent (Cruz, 2008). As such, it is prudent that scholars keep their attention on the topic to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the situation that seems to increase in its significance.

According to the Immigration Policy Center (2010), about half of all immigrants to the United States are women (Martin, 2011; Sreeharsha, 2010), even though in the last three decades the number of female immigrants has been slightly decreasing (Chiswick & DebBurman, 2004). The most common term used is *immigration* or *immigrant*. The term encompasses, often incorrectly, all newcomers and some succeeding generations.

Some immigrant populations moved to the United States to enhance their economic status and are able to travel back to their country of origin and back to the United States. Sometimes they are identified as *economic immigrants*. Another group of newcomers is *refugees*. Although

sometimes refugee and immigrant categories are used interchangeably, refugees have common experiences that may not be shared by other immigrants. One main difference is that refugees may not be able to return to the country of origin due to persecution because of religion, race, nationality, and membership in a particular political or social group (Martin, 2011). Refugee families often leave their homes suddenly or secretly, waiting for months or even years in refugee camps in countries providing temporary asylum to them without any educational or economic opportunities. They arrive in the United States with very little knowledge of culture or society (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 1993). Once in the United States, refugees are required to apply for legal permanent residency (LPR) status or a “green card” within the first year after arrival to the United States otherwise they may be deported. Those granted the LPR status may apply for citizenship after a period of five years (Martin, 2011).

A refugee submits an application for permission for entry from outside of the United States. *Asylees* usually arrive in the United States and then apply for asylum status from inside the United States. Refugees and asylees are considered legal immigrants. Typically, the term “immigrant” includes *foreign-born* persons who arrived in the United States to start a new life without intentions to return to the country of origin. Foreign-born persons may include refugees, asylees, or those looking for economic enhancement. Foreign-born persons also may be those persons providing skills or knowledge for extended periods with definite intentions to return to the country of origin. Examples would be researchers, scientists, engineers, missionaries, or military persons. Foreign-born are defined as persons living in the United States who were not citizens at birth (Camarota, 2005), although when we consider the history of the United States, the category of “foreign-born” may seem artificial (Cranston, 1943). Cranston (1943) stated that a country built for centuries by immigrants should dislike that term.

Each successive generation encounters unique experiences and assimilation processes and because of that, are differentiated. Distinctions among generations are often ambiguous. Some researchers call the foreign-born generation also the *first generation* of immigrants; for others, the *first generation* is the generation born in the United States to the foreign-born parents. *Second generation* is often, but not always, identified as the generation whose grandparents came to the United States, followed by the *third generation*. The research available to me included no more than three generations.

One category that is most often separated from the rest of immigration populations is the illegal immigration category. Although legal and illegal immigrants follow different paths, some researchers may include both categories together. Newcomers who arrive illegally or stay after their work terminates or their student or visitor visa expires are considered to be under illegal immigration status. Although legal immigration populations are generally split equally among men and women, Vernez (1998) reported a higher percentage of women in 1995-1996. Illegal immigration populations tend to be predominantly male immigrants. Often, they arrive first, followed by their families.

Illegal immigration has been one of the leading topics in public as well as legislative discussions. One of the last legislations that attempted to curtail illegal immigration was the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996, designed to increase border control and enforce the law against illegal immigration. The law facilitates deportation and allows adjusting the illegal status after living ten years in the United States. It also requires a resident alien (an immigrant who has been in the United States for a while) to meet an income level of at least 125% of the federal poverty level if he or she is sponsoring a family member arriving in the United States (Vernez, 1998).

Because this law has been in force only about a decade, it is too early to assess its effect on the composition and numbers of illegal immigration. It is possible that if illegal immigration is effectively curtailed, the number of immigrant men will lower because no more men will arrive, and the number of women will increase due to family reunifications. On the other hand, the new required income level may make it difficult to sponsor incoming family members.

Paradoxical contentions that ought to be addressed are that as the American economy is becoming more service oriented, large proportions of jobs are either being exported overseas or are filled with willing natives and needed immigrants. The globalized economy demands workers who are multiculturally competent and adaptable because of their education.

Statement of the Problem

This study attempted to make a significant contribution to the literature on foreign-born women in higher education institutions of the United States. In one of the very few studies that presents educational attainment by different generations of immigrants, Chiswick and DebBurman (2004) argued that the greatest gender difference in educational attainments is among foreign-born; overall, immigrant women acquire about half a year less schooling than immigrant men do. Researchers do not specify the country of the educational attainment, but they conclude that education of immigrants as a recent phenomenon is a “largely ignored issue” (Chiswick & DebBurman, 2004, p. 361).

Research about educated foreign-born women serving as administrators at the graduate level in the United States educational system is rather sparse. Several reasons could be listed. First, most studies fail to distinguish between generations of immigrants (i.e., arrived in the United States versus being born in the United States). This bears significance, because many foreign-born arrive with undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional degrees while second and

subsequent generations receive their education in the United States (Chiswick & DebBurman, 2004; Neidert & Farley, 1985). Some, especially those arriving under the refugee status, may have earned their undergraduate or graduate degrees in their home country; however, because of their illegal departure, they were not able to obtain appropriate documents that may prove earned degrees. As such, they may have to pursue an educational path one more time.

A second reason for the lack of scholarly work pertaining to the topic of foreign-born female professors/administrators could be that some may be arriving illegally, therefore obscuring the data. The research suggests that sometimes foreign-born professional women tend to stay home to rear their families while their spouses work, resulting in further data distortion. Another reason could be that if one chooses to conduct a study of immigration population, a quantitative study using immigrants as a homogeneous group in large numbers is perceived to be more scientific, therefore more reliable than studying a specific cluster or even a person.

Research Questions

In my research, which involved collecting a participant's account of her experience of becoming an administrator of a higher education institution as a foreign-born woman, I sought an understanding of how she makes sense of events throughout the process of becoming an administrator. The central question of my research was "What does it mean to be a foreign-born woman in a leadership position in a higher education institution in the United States?" Additional questions were used while gathering personal reflections of events, for example:

1. What are the challenges and advantages of being a foreign-born woman administrator in higher education in the United States?

2. What experiences and events took place in your life that contributed to your decision to follow a career path to higher education?
3. In what ways are you similar and in what ways are you different than other foreign-born women you know?

I collected a significant amount of data during multiple meetings with my participant. My goal was to re-tell a rich, in-depth life story of a foreign-born woman making sense of life events that led her to the service of a leadership position at a higher education institution in the United States. In order to capture the fullest mosaic of events, I decided to use narrative inquiry methodology.

Definition of Terms

Asylee—refugee applying for visa while living in the United States. Sometimes they are referred to as refugees.

Foreign-born—persons living in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth (Camarota, 2005). This generation is sometimes referred to as a first-generation immigrant as well.

First generation—rather ambiguous term is sometimes used for the foreign-born who became naturalized, or those who were born in the United States.

Higher education institution—two- or four-year postsecondary institutions in the United States.

Immigrant women—umbrella term for women who arrived in the United States with the goal of extending their residence with or without considering a return back to their country of origin. This term often does not specify generation or way of entry (i.e., refugee, asylee, illegal).

Native-born—persons who are born in the United States, regardless of ethnicity.

Refugees—individuals who left their home country due to fear of persecution based on political,

ethnic, or religious grounds. Also referred to as asylees.

Second generation—persons born and living in the United States with at least one parent born in the United States. Technically, they are not immigrants. Some researchers refer to this generation as a first generation because they are the first generation born to naturalized parent/s.

Third generation—persons born and living in the United States with both grandparents born in the United States.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations. The main limitation of this study was that it contains data from only one participant, even though I made every effort to ensure that the story was as deep as possible. Another limitation surfaced once the participant was identified, and that was a time limitation. Just when I was ready to set up a first meeting with the participant, she had to postpone due to her son's health emergency. It took three months before we were able to resume. With this being a dissertation, my time frame to completion of this study was rather limited.

Delimitations. This study utilized narrative inquiry methodology to tell the in-depth life story of one foreign-born woman who holds a doctoral degree and is serving in a leadership position in a higher education institution in the United States. In order to collect the richest, most in-depth life story, I collected and analyzed some initial demographic information from all potential participants in order to identify one iconoclastic participant. Using extreme or deviant case sampling strategy tends to lend more credibility to a study. According to Creswell (2006), extreme and deviant case sampling should be considered when “highly unusual manifestations” (p. 127) are of interest. My initial assumption that the representation of foreign-born women in leadership positions of higher education institutions in the United States is rather low was supported by the extended time required to locate a suitable participant. Whether the participant

rose to the position from the faculty rank or she was appointed from outside of the organization was not a concern of this study.

We cannot assume that any particular life event had a direct impact on the outcome; therefore, no causal conclusions can be made. Also, the findings of this research study cannot be generalized, because the research includes this analysis of an in-depth story of only one participant. We cannot assume that if any other person experienced similar life events, the outcome would resemble the one of the participant of this research.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In this literature review, I have looked at all needed aspects of immigration. Although it may seem that immigration is only an American concern, many world countries are dealing with immigration and assimilation of immigrant populations in the mainstream. First, I have considered a global aspect of immigration, followed by a historical background of immigration in the United States. Economic aspects of immigration are considered in this literature review as well, followed by a specific look at immigrant men and women separately, as their assimilation paths are often diverse. As the education of immigrants is considered, a specific focus is dedicated to the educated women. The literature review concludes with an overview of some major issues that foreign-born women might face while in a position as a faculty or administrator in a higher education institution.

Historical Background

The immigration to the United States may be divided into five distinct eras. The first recorded information about immigration comes from the colonial era, stretching from the 17th century through the early 19th century (Alfred, 2001; Borjas, 1994), when most of the immigrants arrived from Europe. They came from different parts of Europe: Germany, France, and the Netherlands. They are referred to as *settlers*, and their main interest was farming (Diner, 2008). The year 1820 ushered in a second period, called *mass migration*, when approximately 16 million immigrants entered the United States (Diner, 2008). During this time, many Chinese men entered the United States willing to work for very low wages, which prompted the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 (United States Bureau of the Census Report, 1993). The Chinese

Exclusion Act was the only legislation in the history of immigration that specifically excluded persons from one nation from entry into the United States.

The third period (end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century) is sometimes referred to as a *flood* of immigrants (Diner, 2008). Approximately 25 million Europeans, mostly Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Jews, and Poles, made their voyage to the United States over the course of decades after the Civil War. Their main destinations were urban locations, where as industrial workers they aided in the materialization of industries like steel, coal, automobile, textile, and garment production.

Throughout history, the federal government attempted to gain control of immigration. A number of legal documents characterized the fourth era's effort to curtail immigration. The first decades of the 20th century saw the passage of the National Origins Act in 1921 (and its final form in 1924), which restricted the number and the country of origin of immigrants entering the United States. The difference between this act and the Chinese Exclusion Act was that the National Origins Act identified how many newcomers and from what countries might be admitted and naturalized in particular years. This act was replaced by a by-product of the civil rights revolution, the Hart-Celler Act in 1965, which started the fifth era and abolished the racial quota system of the National Origins Act, focusing more on immigrant skills and family ties in the United States (Diner, 2008). The Act extended preference to those with needed skills and knowledge as well as allowing reunification of families.

Although the Second World War brought in millions of Germans, the numbers of immigrants from Europe began to decrease. Starting in about 1970 and thereafter, the United States saw an increase of immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Alfred, 2001; Diner, 2008). Overall, the largest number of immigrants (about 44 percent of all foreign-born) entered

the United States within the decade of 1980 to 1990. The continuous flood of immigrants began forming “hostile public opinion” (Thompson, 1999, p. 46) and requests from the American public to decrease immigration. A concern that prompted this unrest was that the expenditure for assimilation of immigrants was too high, especially when many of the new immigrants refused to adapt to American culture, values, and beliefs (Loveless, McCue, Surette, & Norris-Tirell, 1996). On the other hand, in their qualitative and quantitative study, Loveless et al. (1996) argued that the rates with which immigrants utilized public assistance were actually lower than the public assistance usage rates of the native-born citizens. They further developed the thought that the earlier population of immigrants arrived with more education than the more recent groups. Because the educational attainment of the later groups was much lower, more public assistance was necessary. Diner (2008) concurred and further noted benefits that immigrants brought to the American culture, such as different languages, cultures, and religions; therefore, they actually enriched the United States.

Immigration Globally

Immigration is not just an “American” issue; multiple countries around the world have taken the burden of accepting foreign citizens in order to better their lives. As cited in Borjas (1994), the United Nations reported in 1989 that about 1.2% of the world’s population was living in a different country from that in which they were born. Borjas (1994) reported that in France, nearly 11% of the population is foreign-born; 17% in Switzerland and 9% in the United Kingdom are foreign born as well. The most extensive research on immigration populations has been done by Canada, due to the large numbers of entering immigrants that generally are annually equal to one percent of the entire population (Schaafma & Sweetman, 2001).

That immigration affects other countries besides the United States becomes also evident in Schaafma and Sweetman's study (2001). Schaaffma and Sweetman explored the effect of age at the time of arrival to Canada, making it comparable to Borjas's study (1994) for the U.S. immigration population. They concluded that there is a strong correlation between age at arrival and overall success, not only at their job, but also in postsecondary education. Using Canadian census data they reported an overall inverse relationship between age at the time of arrival and returns on economic standing and education. Earnings of those arriving before their teen years are comparable to those of native-born Canadians of similar age. The researchers suggested programs that may have helped young immigrants with their access into higher education; this is congruent with recommendations of Preloznik (2002) in his study that included immigrant women in Europe participating in organized sex-crime rings.

Immigrants in the United States Economy

Immigrants contribute significantly to the U.S. economy on many levels (Camarota, 2005). Even though they often work harder and longer hours than native-born citizens (Mamiseishvili, 2010), as a group after 14-15 years, they still experience higher rates of poverty and welfare use as well as higher uninsured numbers than do the native-born. Approximately 12.1% of the population today is foreign-born Americans in comparison to about 9.7% in 1850 (Okigbo, 2010); however, after 15 years of assimilation, their median income is only about 72% of that of native-born (Camarota, 2005). In his research, Camarota (2005) speculated that faster assimilation would lead to a decrease in the use of public resources by the immigrant population; however, immigrants face multiple issues, including job and educational discrimination. Borjas (1994) postulated that immigrants arriving in the United States with a higher level of productivity and those who adapt quickly can make a significant contribution to the United

States economy. Despite that, Borjas (1994) further suggested negative trends of immigrant assimilation. In his quantitative study using 1990 Census data, he was able to discover that immigrants who arrived to the United States between 1950 and 1960 earned 19.6% more than natives did; however, immigrants who arrived between 1985 and 1989 earned 31.7% less than natives (Borjas, 1994).

The American population is comprised of about 12% immigrant residents (Alfred, 2005; Camarota, 2005; Immigration Policy Center, 2010). The current political climate and ongoing debate about U.S. immigration policies accentuates the importance of additional research. An abundance of scholarly articles exists describing the multiple issues that the immigrant population faces as a whole. Alfred (2001) considered reasons why immigrants come to America. He further argued that professionals rarely regain the status they had in their country of origin, and therefore they often experience lower job satisfaction. Professionals tend to assimilate more quickly to the communities they live in while remaining closely connected to their home countries. His findings concurred with those of Camarota (2005). Borjas's (1994) comprehensive report on the economic impact of immigration on the United States economy offered results of immigrants who arrived in 1950-1990. He was able to observe that immigrant groups that arrived within the last two decades were more dependent on public services because their education level is lower than that of the groups arriving in the previous decades.

Immigrant Men

Research has been applied to immigration as a whole, although there is a significant body which studied male immigrants. Some studies are very specific regarding particular ethnic groups or a particular geographic area. Both of the aspects were combined in the Bhattacharya (2011) study of 17 participants who arrived from India and began their assimilation process in

New York. Using qualitative analysis, a community-based participatory study, and drawing on participants' narratives, Bhattacharya (2011) explored different sociocultural components and their influence on the process of acculturation into a community. Bhattacharya (2011) concluded that community as a whole plays a tremendous role in English language proficiency, social interaction skills, and other aspects of cultural competence. Varma (2010) offered an additional picture of Indian-born scientists. He argued that although academic positions carry higher status to many Indian-born, the positions of authority and power are not in the future of many of them. Most of a little over three million Indian-born immigrants work in the high-tech sector; however, their earnings are not commensurate to those of their American counterparts. Yoshida and Smith (2005) reported similar results. Using an immigrant male panel data set of Statistics Canada's *Workplace and Employee Survey*, Yoshida and Smith (2005) suggested that lower wages may come from their initial jobs that often are difficult to overcome.

A more general study of immigrant men using Census data from 1970, 1980, and 1990 expanded upon the earnings of the population (Duleep & Regets, 1997). Somewhat contrary findings showed that even though they may earn less than native-born men in similar industries, the earning gap of immigrant men is usually closed within the first decade, suggesting a faster growth in earnings. Their findings are contradictory to Camarota's findings (2005), which may be due to different cohorts in different times.

Corley and Sabharwal (2007) expanded on Alfred's (2001) and Borjas's (1994) findings. In their quantitative study using data from the National Science Foundation (2001) Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR), they compared work satisfaction and productivity levels of foreign-born scientists with doctoral degrees and native-born scientists with the same level of education. They reported that foreign-born scientists might be more often excluded from senior positions.

They further suggested that despite accepting lower-ranking jobs and lower salaries, they have higher productivity including patents, articles, books, and conference papers (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007). This finding was congruent with Mamiseishvili's (2010) conclusions.

Immigrant Women

Women's immigration paths frequently differ from those of men. According to Preloznik (2002), women arrive without family support and in an effort to survive, fall prey to not only discrimination but also sexual exploitation. He recounted and compared difficulties of foreign-born women in parts of Europe and the United States while trying to build a new life. He speculated that a lack of education and community support in addition to government resources may be strong contributors in foreign-born women's participation in sexual trafficking. The prevalence of research about foreign-born women is focused more upon their social experiences such as low economic status, poverty, lack of good job, domestic violence, and sexual trafficking, although there is some preliminary research on their earnings. Often, women contribute by fulfilling domestic duties and limiting their participation in the workplace and educational opportunities, especially when small children are present. Overall, migrant women tend to have lower education levels than native-born women, have more children, and tend to work in low-quality jobs. These findings were reported by Dustmann and Schmidt (2000), together with wage performance findings in panel analysis over a 12-year period. In their comparison of native-born women and immigrant women in the same labor markets, they concluded that immigrant women received lower wages than native-born women mainly because of their lower educational attainment (Dustmann & Schmidt, 2000). Further, they discovered that their female immigrant women participants worked predominantly in full-time jobs while native-born women preferred part-time jobs, but migrant women earn less in both. They

speculated that the preference of a full-time job might speed up assimilation into the main culture. Some of the aspects coincided with Read and Cohen's (2007) study; however, they both studied different populations of women immigrants.

Read and Cohen (2007) studied and compared the 2000 Census of 12 ethnicities of immigrant women. Researchers found large disparities among studied groups. Education seemed to be a predicting factor for employment, more so within a group than among different ethnicities. Another important factor to consider was marriage and size of the family, especially small children, as small children reduce women's participation in the workforce. This was more significant for Asian, Indian, and Arab women, but perhaps less significant for Mexican and Chinese women.

Ozden and Neagu (2007) used the 2000 Census as well, but they concentrated upon a different aspect. Their interest was on immigrant women's performance in the United States market. Researchers found that immigrant women earned more than the native women did at the time of migration. Lower earnings at the later time were attributed to working less because spouses' career and earnings stabilized. They also found disparities in wages and performance among different groups, which concurs with the findings from the Read and Cohen study (2007). Ozden and Neagu (2007) further recognized that immigrant women who obtained their education in Western Europe and the United States exhibited highest levels of performance; however, they did not report on their earnings. Vernez (1998) argued that although educational attainment in the home country was strong for immigrant men in attaining economic success in the United States, immigrant women have not been successful.

Although Hackett (1996) did not analyze her participants' stories, she provided detailed narratives of refugee women from Asia, Europe, Africa, and Central America about their

struggles while leaving their country and starting a new life in the United States. Some stories concurred with Preloznik's (2002) findings.

Hancock (2006) offered results of her study about immigrant Mexican women; some aspects did not concur with Read and Cohen's (2007) findings when discussing the importance of marriage for Mexican couples who immigrated to the United States. She concentrated on a population of undocumented Mexican immigrant couples. Hancock (2006) found that Mexican immigrant women endured more severe abuse for longer periods than did White women. Often, Mexican immigrant women had more education than their partner had, and these women contributed considerably to the family income. Risk factors that contributed to a wife's abuse were identified to be her husband's alcohol abuse, low level of education, and unemployment. Lack of statistical data about this social phenomenon is a reason why there are no programs or assistance available to affected women. Another concern is that abused women often do not report abuse for fear of dealing with the law and the fear of possible deportation and family separation.

Corra and Kimuna (2009) attempted to fill the research gap on Black immigrant women. Their quantitative study included the 1990 and 2000 U.S. population censuses. The groups of interest were Caribbean Black women with English-, French-, and Spanish-speaking heritage and native-born Black women. The large sample of 60,000-plus participants offered insight on earnings differences among all four groups. Findings showed that in the 1990 sample, all three groups of Caribbean women enjoyed higher earnings than native-born Black women, although the same results were not indicated for the 2000 year sample. The authors speculated that the lower earnings of native-born Black women may have been attributed to a historic perception

with colonial views, and they further suggested that race may have still been a significant factor when discussing earnings of Black women.

Education of Immigrants

Historically, the contributions of newcomers to the United States on many levels cannot be denied. As the U.S. expanded from the east to the west, immigrants helped as land workers and farmers. Europeans helped to build cities of the East Coast, slaves labored in the Deep South, and Asian workers helped to build the railroad that connected the coasts. The industrialization era found immigrant workers in steel mills and factories.

As the United States economy shifted toward service and later technology in the last half of the 20th century, the requirement for immigrant human capital has changed. Educated immigrants replaced settlers, farmers, and industrial workers. In his quantitative study, Camarota (2005) reported that in 1970, 18% of immigrants earned at least a college degree compared to 13% of native-born. Lee (2010) concurred that those immigrants who were naturalized in 1980 were more likely to hold a bachelor's degree than those naturalized later. Lee further noted that, overall, during the last three decades of the 20th century, more immigrants arrived without high school diplomas and less with graduate or professional degrees (Lee, 2010). Camarota's (2005) findings were similar. He reported that in the years 1980 and 2005, the numbers of educated immigrants have been decreasing starting at the beginning of the 21st century. This was happening while American higher education institutions were becoming more diverse and its economy more globalized.

Camarota (2005) further suggested that professionals and their families generally enjoyed preferential treatment upon their request for entry into the United States, and often they joined their field of expertise. He estimated that among the post-1990 immigrants, almost 8% held

graduate or professional degrees (Camarota, 2005). Often, though, they had to start at the beginning, including working at menial jobs, regardless of the positions held in their homeland (Alfred, 2001).

While reviewing the available research pertaining to the topic of immigration, I observed that the majority of studies conducted pertained to the concerns of male immigrants, whether as workers or as professionals. This may seem reasonable, especially because often it is the male spouse who enters the labor force to earn a higher income, while the female spouse attends to the family's needs. In addition, an often uneducated immigration population may have access only to low-paying jobs that are not the preference of native born.

Tainer (1988), in her quantitative study, explored the relationship of English language fluency and earnings in foreign-born men. In her sample of 4,297 foreign-born men aged 25-64, over 61% of foreign-born men who reported their primary language to be different than English earned approximately \$5,000 or less in 1975. On the other side of the spectrum, 69% of foreign-born men who earned up to \$20,000 reported their primary language to be English.

Neidert and Farley (1985) inquired whether there was any correlation between assimilation of immigrant men and ethnicity and generation. Although their findings were mixed, they found that by at least the third generation, Russians and Eastern European men were more successful than English men when using their educational credentials to obtain prestigious jobs. The study did not report how their earnings compared to those born in the United States.

Historically, New York has been one of the most common ports of entry for newcomers. The increased population of Asian-Indian men who migrated to New York City caught the attention of Bhattacharya (2011), adding to scholarly work about foreign-born and native-born men living in New York City.

Foreign-born professors of geography were of concern to Foote, Li, Monk, and Theobald (2008). Researchers argued that foreign-born faculty in geographic departments have a different set of needs even if they completed their degrees in the United States. They were often subjects of discrimination. One of the concerns they explored was the attitude of American students toward foreign-born faculty (Foote et al., 2008). Theirs, as well as the Corley and Sabharwal (2007) study, did not specify gender or country of origin of the researched population.

Educated Women Immigrants

In reference to research about educated foreign-born women, a tentative base of preliminary information about women in science is available. However, studies that draw attention to foreign-born women serving as administrators in higher education institutions are still scarce. Czarniawska and Sevon (2008) offered a fairly historic and international perspective. They followed four life stories of women, all from historic Europe situated in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Researchers reported that these women were “double strangers” (Czarniawska & Sevon, 2008, p. 235) in academe, because they attempted to enter a male profession and they were strangers to the country. One such example is the story of Maria Sklodowska-Curie. Originally from Poland, she received a Nobel Prize for her work in radioactivity and three years later became the first woman professor to teach at Sorbonne, France (Czarniawska & Sevon, 2008). After she received her second Nobel Prize in 1911, she became ostracized by the press and community. Although the media did not agree, Madame Curie was considered successful by her colleagues; Czarniawska and Sevon (2008) offered the assumption that it was perhaps because she considered her profession to be a “calling” (p. 260).

Reviewing scholarly work dedicated to women immigrants, it becomes evident that this particular topic has not been given as much attention as the topic of male immigration. Specifically lean is scholarly work investigating foreign-born women in United States academe. In addition, completed work often does not differentiate between foreign-born women and the successive generations partially assimilated to the culture. It is reasonable to assume that increased interest of scholars became apparent after the women's movement in the United States post-1960s. As native-born women joined the United States labor force, immigrant women followed.

The early 20th century was characterized by traditional views on the position of women and men in the society. The view of women as homemakers who needed minimal education was dominating not only daily lives but also scholarly work. Seller (1978) discussed a position of immigrant women in the postcolonial United States, where immigrant women were considered "backward than the men, unintelligent, uninformed, and dirty in the home" (p. 309). Any education that may have been available was of social and vocational character, as it pertained to their lives at home and their position within the society. A belief that any intellectual training of women would be wasteful because women had only mediocre abilities was supported by well-known educators and psychologists, according to Seller (1978). Immigrant women experienced not only the lack of educational opportunities; in an effort to Americanize them, they felt insulted when members of churches attempted to educate them about personal hygiene and sex or when they were forced to use cheap products in their kitchens to be frugal.

An extensive empirical study by Vernez (1998) offered a comprehensive look at immigrant women in the U.S. labor force. The study included data collected between 1960 and 1997. It presented information from two main perspectives: ethnicity and level of education.

Migrant women from Europe, the Caribbean, and some Asian countries tended to be more educated and older, having fewer children and living in smaller households than did women from Mexico, Central America, and Indochina (Vernez, 1998).

The participation of immigrant women in the economy cannot be understated. In 1998, immigrant women contributed about 15% to the growth of the national labor force (Vernez, 1998) in comparison to less than 3% in the 1960s. Immigrant women were more likely than native-born women to fill low-paying jobs. Vernez (1998) reported that approximately 40% of immigrant women continued to fill the low-income jobs like laborers, private household workers, and janitors, while the number of native-born women in those fields has been decreasing. For college-educated immigrant women, the tendency to work as teachers, lawyers, and social workers is less likely than for native-born women.

When discussing the education of immigrant women, Vernez (1998) considered four categories of educational attainment: less than 12 years, 12 years, 13-15 years, and college graduate, when studying their earnings. He reported that higher earnings as well as willingness to enter the labor market were indicative of their education. Where he fell short in his analysis is that he did not take into account different educational systems in other countries. It became apparent that there was a large disparity when solely considering years of schooling. The Vernez (1998) study offered evidence that immigrant women, although often placed in one category, have divergent experiences, education, and region of origin, cultures, and mores. Some spoke English and some did not. Some had children and some did not.

A significant recount of women refugees' stories compiled by Hackett (1996) included experiences of women refugees from Cambodia, Bosnia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Afghanistan, Germany, and other countries. Hackett provided voice to these women that they might not have otherwise.

Each refugee woman presented her story as an individual and shared her unique account of transformation resulting from the refugee experience. Graphic description of war experiences, political oppression, and trauma from leaving their home country followed women refugees to the new place. They brought with them “their skills, education, knowledge, culture, plans and vision for the future” (Hackett, 1996, p. x), and many of them had to start from scratch regardless of their position in their home country. Perhaps only “uncommon resiliency” (Hackett, 1996, p. xi) empowered these women to endure the displacement from their country and assimilation to the new society. Although these stories described in detail their departure and arrival, they did not evaluate their quality of life in the United States.

Danquah (2000) took a different approach. Most of the women who contributed their stories to her have earned their degrees either in their home country or after their arrival in the United States. Many of them served as professors, offered lectures, and produced as writers. The author suggested that perhaps there is a difference between foreign-born women coming to the United States based on the societal strata they came from as well as the level of education they acquired (Danquah, 2000).

Goyette and Xie (1999), in their quantitative study, captured the relationship of immigration and gender among women scientists and engineers. Using the 1990 census and the longitudinal 1982-1989 Survey of Natural and Social Scientists and Engineers, they argued that immigrant women were promoted less frequently than immigrant men and native-born women. One of the explanations researchers offered is that immigrant women, regardless of their educational attainments, are considered “secondary” immigrants, meaning that they arrived as a spouse (Goyette & Xie, 1999, p. 401). The authors argued that perhaps the market is not welcoming secondary immigrants (wives), especially when the primary immigrant (husband)

enjoys a sponsorship of an employer, and they speculated that perhaps the public is not used to educated women scientists (Goyette & Xie, 1999). The public is used to seeing an immigrant woman as a spouse, not necessarily as her own entity, which may lead to erroneous conclusions.

In 1994, 11.7% of all scientists in the United States were foreign born compared to 8.5% foreign born in the general population (Goyette & Xie, 1999, p. 395). McDonald (1999) recounted that even though most of the Nobel Prize laureates are from the United States, most of them are foreign born.

One of the outcomes of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and of the feminist movement in the 1970s was the increase of Latina women in higher education (Medina & Luna, 2000). However, regardless of all those efforts, the presence of women Latina professors is more of a token than a reality. Latina women earned the second least percentage of doctoral degrees (2.6%) in 1993-1994, right after Native American women (0.4%). As members of the professoriate, they often experienced poor support and alienation (Medina & Luna, 2000). Narrations of three Latina professors identified issues they faced during their studies as well as while working and also expressed the need for further research in the incorporation of minority faculty, especially Latina women in academe.

As higher education plays a key role in preparing individuals for an increasingly global economy, foreign-born faculty provide intellectual capital and a worldwide view that is imperative for developing comprehensive skills and knowledge required in today's economy. The need for foreign-born faculty in American higher education has been supported by the research of Lin, Pearce, and Wang (2008). The researchers proposed that not only American higher education needs foreign-born faculty; the foreign-born faculty occupies a special niche in American four-year colleges, especially in pure and applied research. In this regard, Lin et al.

(2008) studied four dimensions: demography, teaching and research, achievement, and satisfaction. Using the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty data, they argued that the majority of foreign-born faculty entering American higher education institutions were men, and almost half of them were of Asian background. Their major contribution was in science teaching and research at American four-year colleges and universities. Although their contributions cannot be argued, they were being tenured at lower rates than native-born faculty, and despite that, foreign-born faculty are generally more satisfied with their jobs than native-born faculty (Lin et al., 2008). One overall concern that is voiced in this research is that because operational definitions often differ and foreign-born faculty are often identified as a “minority,” some ethnic groups like African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans may be severely underrepresented in American higher education institutions, which is exacerbated by limited access and much stricter immigration and entry policies in the wake of the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks (Lin et al., 2008). This austere limitation of international talent may severely dwarf American ability in full participation in global economy.

One of the very few studies that is dedicated to immigrant women in academe is a qualitative study by Skachkova (2007). This research showed that the status of immigrant professional women is affected by their gender and ethnicity. Skachkova (2007) interviewed 34 women professors born outside of the United States who were employed in a research university in New York State. She found out that foreign-born female professors experienced less than favorable treatment at that particular institution. Their foreign citizenship created a barrier to gaining access to grants. They had been pigeonholed to teach and study topics from their background that may become published less often, and in addition, their participation in administration was not significant. General lack of acceptance and support resulted in

“discrimination in the form of sexism, racism and ethnocentrism” (Skachkova, 2007, p. 729).

What set these women apart was that they used their “foreignness” to their advantage to create more diversified and international classrooms. Using their multinational perspective, they were able to incorporate international strategies in their classrooms. They were able to create their own networks in response to being excluded from domestic professional networks.

Another frequently cited article on the topic of foreign-born women in academe is that of Mamiseishvili (2010). Her findings were in congruence with Skachkova (2007); she further expanded on their roles and productivity. Her quantitative study utilized the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty sample of more than 35,000 faculty members from 1,800 different institutions via a self-administered phone survey, with a response rate of 76%. Her findings were parallel to those of Corley and Sabharwal (2007), who concentrated on educated immigrant men. Foreign-born women outproduced their native-born counterparts in scholarly output (Mamiseishvili, 2010). The researchers expressed an assumption that foreign-born women were no exception when considering international academics. As for teaching responsibilities, Mamiseishvili (2010) reported that foreign-born women professors taught fewer students, which decreased their student contact, and as a result, they had less experience, often resulting in lower income. This is more prevalent, especially in undergraduate programs. This researcher further reported that foreign-born women’s effectiveness and performance were often compared to the level of language proficiency (Mamiseishvili, 2010). These findings coincided with and further developed the Skachkova (2007) research. One finding that was contradictory to most of the previous research was that the foreign-born women earned about \$2,600 more than native-born women. Mamiseishvili (2010) attributed this difference to the fact that foreign-born

faculty often were involved in research that is “culturally defined as masculine” (p. 152) instead of traditional roles like nurturing and advising.

The fact that foreign-born professors were more productive has been reported by Schmidt (2009) as well. His research specifically concentrated on foreign faculty who earned their undergraduate degrees outside of the United States and were compared to the similar cohort of native-born faculty who earned their undergraduate degrees in the United States. He argued that increased productivity of foreign-born professors was due to the fact that only the best were employed by United States higher education institutions (Schmidt, 2009). Although his research did not differentiate among genders, he hypothesized that foreign-born professors are more likely to be male and married with a spouse staying at home than comparable native-born faculty.

Foreign-Born Faculty Concerns and Assimilation in United States Academe

As globalization overtakes the world, the efforts of United States higher education institutions are to produce workers and professionals with a competitive edge for the 21st century. The international perspective carried by foreign-born faculty is increasingly becoming a research interest. The need to identify concerns and offer some solutions is becoming an issue in the scholarly community.

Alfred’s (2005) qualitative study explored experiences of women of color in academe. Fourteen women in positions of faculty and academic leadership offered their perspective on what it means to be a foreign-born woman of color in the standard “white and male” (Alfred, 2005, p. 6) professoriate and leadership. Their narratives documented that America, and higher education especially, represents a destination simultaneously of great opportunities as well as discrimination. Although some research suggested that foreign-born women produce more than native-born women (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007; Mamiseishvilli, 2010), these participants

reported that they were subjects of racial profiling and as such, were expected to behave in a certain way. They were marginalized and struggled with developing their own identity within United States academe (Alfred, 2005).

Alberts (2008) presented similar findings from her study. She compared her data from undergraduate students as well as foreign-born professors of geography from eight Midwest universities and was able to identify a few areas of concern of both groups. The students' main concerns were professors' accents and that "the instructors were not American" (Alberts, 2008, p. 189). Foreign-born instructors identified mainly the disruptive classroom behavior of American students, their disrespect to professors, and their entitlement to a good grade.

Collins (2008) was able to add a different perspective. Her study concentrated on students' perception of foreign-born professors. The survey results, provided by students who have taken courses from the foreign-born faculty members, indicated an overall positive experience despite their accent (Collins, 2008). This finding was contrary to most of the research that indicated that students respond unfavorably to the accents of foreign-born professors. In addition, analyzing data collected from surveys of about 30 faculty members at the university of her employment at the time of the research, Collins (2008) reported that faculty often experienced feelings of loneliness and difficulty finalizing their legal status in the United States. Collins also offered solutions for foreign-born faculty to feel less the "other" and experience more of a sense of belonging. She recommended for foreign-born professors to become forthright about English as their second language, speaking slowly, especially during lectures, and encouraging students to raise their hands if they do not understand (Collins, 2008). These suggestions coincided with recommendations of Alberts (2008) in her qualitative survey. She concurred with Collins (2008) that students generally reported a positive experience when

learning from foreign-born professors, and although there were some disadvantages, she urged foreign-born professors as well as students to work together in their efforts to create a mutually respectful learning environment.

Gahungu (2011) expanded on the foreignness of the foreign-born faculty members. In his qualitative study, he further explored the role of foreign-born faculty and administrators in the United States higher education institutions. Once again, because of the inconsistent definitions, outside of science and technology fields, it is difficult to report precise statistics; however, most of the foreign-born people with graduate and professional degrees come from South and East Asia (Gahungu, 2011). The most significant contribution of this research is that the author suggested that the foreignness should be considered an asset and that foreign-born faculty and administrators should not try to become so assimilated that they lose that characteristic (Gahungu, 2011). It is what makes them indispensable to the higher education system as it is today.

In their quantitative study involving foreign-born instructors at Israel's largest public college, Bokek-Cohen and Davidovich (2010) offered an international perspective to the assimilation of foreign faculty to the current culture. Their findings about foreign-born faculty performance and effectiveness concurred with those of Mamiseishvili (2010) and Corley and Sabharwal (2007). Bokek-Cohen and Davidovich (2010) reported that although many academic institutions in the United States hire foreign-born faculty, there is no clear understanding of the issues and difficulties they face. The authors reported that about 37% of all faculty at Israel's largest public college are foreign born, which is quite close to the percentage reported in United States higher education institutions (Bokek-Cohen & Davidovich, 2010).

Conclusions

My review of the literature suggests that more in-depth research about foreign-born women in higher education is needed, especially in the area of senior administration. I believe that the topic of this study and my chosen methodology, narrative inquiry, offers some missing pieces of information. The following chapter will explain different aspects of my chosen research methodology in an effort to share the story of a foreign-born woman in a leadership position in a United States higher education institution.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

This chapter sets forth all aspects of the research methodology used in this study, namely: (a) narrative inquiry background, (b) setting and participants, (c) safeguarding of human subjects, (d) research design, (e) procedures, (f) data analysis procedures, (g) role of researcher, and (h) potential contribution to research.

Research Questions

This research study attempted to investigate what it means to be a foreign-born woman in an influential position as an administrator in a higher education institution in the United States. Subsequent questions used in order to gather personal reflections of events in their historical context, their causes, and effects were:

1. What are the challenges and advantages of being a foreign-born woman administrator in higher education in the United States?
2. What experiences and events took place in your life that contributed to your decision to follow a career path to higher education?
3. In what ways are you similar and in what ways are you different from other foreign-born women you know?

This narrative study explored in depth the life story of one foreign-born woman who serves in a role of leader in a higher education institution in the United States. I have collected extensive information about the participant in order to understand multiple layers of her life history in a context of different events that shaped it. Due to the nature of the research questions, I chose to utilize the methodology of narrative inquiry because it gives an opportunity to gather in-depth data from the retelling of the participant's life story in relation to the research questions.

Narrative Inquiry Background

Narrative inquiry is based on Creswell's (2006) model. Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative observational research methodology "with specific focus on the stories told by individuals" (Creswell, 2006, p. 54). Procedures in data gathering consist of concentrating on studying one or two individuals and their stories, documenting their individual experiences, and organizing them by major life events. Reported life events are woven into historical context to illustrate how individuals are enabled or restrained by social circumstances (Creswell, 2006).

Narrative inquiry collects data for the purpose of research through storytelling. It may also include field notes, journals, personal letters, and other documents. In addition, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted, the narrations become collaborative documents about the narrator and researcher. Narrative interviews result in sharing life stories while identifying their parallels as well as areas of divergence.

Life stories occur in a narrative pattern, and each experience lasts a certain period of time, with the present experience exchanged for a new and different experience. In narrative inquiry the researcher is interested in how different experiences affect people's lives and choices during their life spans, and as a result, how they shaped their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry helps create a new understanding of meaning, not necessarily adding new data or knowledge to a particular field. Emden (1998) contemplated that narrative inquiry organizes individual lives "into a whole" (p. 35), modifying the sense of temporality and connecting individuals to the society. Polkinghorne (1998) argued that narrative inquiry organizes singular "elements of awareness into meaningful episodes" (p. 1). He offered the analogy of water atoms and water to consider when understanding the relationship between different life events and the entire life outcome. Hydrogen and oxygen have their own

characteristics and when combined into a molecule of water, the new molecule has an entirely different characteristic yet again.

Hendry (2010) argued that narrative inquiry is the oldest form of inquiry and that data- and knowledge-gathering originated from the narrative. Narrative means “to account” and is derived from *gno*, meaning “to know” (Hendry, 2010, p. 72), thus portraying the life stories of the participants as well as their interaction with others. It is by this juxtaposition of all of their stories that narrative inquiry becomes a “sacred” endeavor (Kim, 2008, p. 262) and a “way of life and living with others” (Hendry, 2010, p. 79).

Narrative inquiry uses storytelling as a source of data for analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Emden, 1998; Frankland, 2010; Riley & Hawe, 2005; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007; Varaki, 2007). The narrative inquiry methodology has been used in education, psychiatry, anthropology, organizational science, sociology, and medicine (Riley & Hawe, 2005).

The difference between storytelling and narrative inquiry is that the latter attempts to make sense of the stories, not simply gathering and telling them. This “reconstruction of experience” (Conle, 2000, p. 190) may lack precision due to multiple factors, including time, perception, and personal preferences in remembering. As a reflection (Riley & Hawe, 2005), where time may alter the narrative of the experience, narrative inquiry may bring up the concerns of narcissism, self-indulgence, lack of rigor, and perhaps a lack of relevance and resonance to the topic at hand (Frankland, 2010; Hendry, 2010; Kim, 2008; Riley & Hawe, 2005; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007; Varaki, 2007). Further, narrative inquiry does not strive to find the truth; it merely invites others to share common experiences (Varaki, 2007). Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) recognized more concerns regarding the analysis of narrative inquiry. Due to individuality of accounts, it may be difficult to express meaning of the story in a larger context.

Often, it is not clear to whom the storytelling belongs; also, there could be a disagreement between the researcher's interpretation and the way participants believe the story was told.

As such, some critiques argue that narrative inquiry is not a credible scholarly methodology. For example, the current political context seems to buttress this notion by identifying the scientifically based research as a preferred research method as exhibited in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, as cited by Hendry (2010). Among some scholars, this controversy has elicited thoughts similar to a "political oppression against narrative research" (Kim, 2008, p. 262). However, it seems that more researchers are using qualitative research, specifically narrative inquiry, thus becoming troubadours of the transformative impact of this method, especially in the educational domain. Proponents of narrative inquiry argue that the methodology of narrative inquiry enables the researcher to reach new depths of understanding that no quantitative research can reach.

Narrative inquiry is characterized by collaboration between the researcher and the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007; Varaki, 2007). It is unavoidable that the story will contain a certain level of the researcher's frame of reference. Further, maintaining trust between the researcher and the participant is imperative in creating rigor and relevance (Hendry, 2010; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007; Varaki, 2007).

Settings and Participant

The participant selection process included my personal and professional local networks, local immigration organizations, and online nonprofessional and professional social networks. Within a period of about two months, I identified eight potential participants. Four candidates living on the East Coast were originally from England and Eastern or Western Germany, and they all came to the United States as infants or very small children with their parents solely due

to economic reasons. One, living the closest to my residence, was born in Eastern Asia. She refused to participate as a single participant and further expressed doubts as to whether I had invested enough time and effort in finding a suitable participant because of the relatively close proximity of our residences. One potential participant returned to her home country in Africa, and another returned to Puerto Rico. This last candidate would not qualify because she was in the final stages of completing her own dissertation.

The eighth candidate became the participant of this narrative study. I located her through my own colleague; Eva (pseudonym) agreed to participate in the study at the end of September. My intent was to develop exemplary representation that offers richness and a multilayered life story. Her origin and initial information provided me with enough evidence to believe that her story would provide rich content for this study. Initially, we introduced ourselves, shared a quick background that included our residences and work locations, and agreed to schedule a first interview. However, our planned meeting schedule was interrupted about two weeks later by a short note from Eva that one of her children had become acutely ill and she needed to attend to his recovery.

Communication halted for about three months until a message came that she was ready to resume a commitment to this study. Within a week, I had made travel arrangements for the first narrative interview. In order to better understand her story, I decided to meet with her face-to-face in a hotel close to her workplace. The follow-up face-to-face interview took place at the same hotel. Additional series of interviews were a combination of phone conversations and e-mails.

The content of all interviews was audio recorded in addition to copious notes that I took during and immediately after each interview. Contents of each interview were transcribed with

Eva's permission, and I used them to prepare my next series of questions and areas of interest for our next interview.

Research Ethics

This qualitative study followed strict guidelines for human subjects as established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The participant was contacted and data was collected only after George Fox University's IRB approved the process, which I adhered to through the entire data collection and analysis processes and continued to adhere to as stated in the approved form. Any identifiable documentation (written notes, audio, documents, artifacts, articles, photographs) were and will be regarded with the utmost confidentiality. Any tangible document and media is stored in my personal safe at home. All of the names and any identifiable information were changed to protect the participant.

Once we scheduled the date of the first narrative interview, I e-mailed Eva the consent form for her review prior to our first face-to-face meeting. I addressed Eva's only question about anonymity. I explained that I would change any identifiable information and that any collected data will be stored in a locked family safe when not in use by me. I will personally destroy all records three years from the time my final draft gets accepted by my dissertation committee. I also offered for her to review the transcripts to make sure no information could be connected to her. Eva expressed satisfaction with my explanation and signed the consent form (see Appendix A).

Research Design

Due to very specific desired outcome, this qualitative study used narrative inquiry as the methodology of choice. This study used narrative inquiry as a type of observational research methodology of a participant who could share her story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell,

2006). Procedures in data gathering consisted of concentrating on studying one individual and her story, documenting her individual experiences, and organizing it by major life events. Reported life events were woven into historical context to illustrate how the participant was enabled or restrained by social sources and resources. This narrative study included a collaborative document between the participant and the researcher.

Research Procedures

This qualitative research study used narrative inquiry as a guide for data collection and analysis. Data collection was done by capturing the participant's life stories and reflections using several techniques, such as a series of face-to-face meetings, phone interviews, and e-mails. I used guiding questions (see Appendix B) to initiate the interviews. However, due to the nature of interview, these guiding questions simply led to open conversation that was audio recorded. All verbal communication (face-to-face and phone conversations) was recorded and professionally transcribed. Records were repeatedly re-read and reviewed to identify areas where more details were needed to gain clearer understanding of events. Clarification questions were prepared before each face-to-face and phone interview; however, impromptu questions often surfaced and were added during interviews, depending on the course of discussion. In preparation for data analysis, data was reviewed repeatedly, looking for common themes and epiphanies. Once those were identified, data was chronologically organized into identified themes. Meaning or understanding was verified with the participant who provided the original data.

Once I received an approval of selected methodology and procedures by the IRB, the participant was chosen. I used multiple networking strategies to identify the participant with the most interesting background who would provide a rich content for the study. I did initial

screening targeted to find out the circumstances under which the potential participant left the original country. I chose to use a participant with a rich enough background that would provide sufficient depth to the story. I excluded potential participants who arrived as very small children with their parents, from a country where they were not facing any persecution, where the motive was purely economic, and where there was no concern of a language barrier.

The participant who fit these initial criteria was provided with a consent form. I made sure that I answered her questions and concerns before the participant signed the consent form. In order to build rapport with the participant, I apprised the participant of criteria for her selection and explained the purpose of this study.

For both of the face-to-face interviews, I used two digital recorders as well as field notes. In addition to recording the audio data, I documented the participant's body language, voice pitch, and any facial expressions and behaviors. In addition, I noted any circumstantial instances that could add additional information to the story. Whenever appropriate, I shared relevant memories from my background and discussed their resemblance or difference with the participant. However, especially during the first face-to-face interview, I consciously made an effort not to share too much of my story, to make sure that participant's Eva's recollections of life events remained untarnished by my story. I asked her very few specific questions; I mostly used probing questions to access deeper recall. If I shared my story with her, I always made sure that it came second, after hers. Immediately after each interview, I noted in my field notes anything that I may have missed to note during the interview. Later, all of the recorded conversations were professionally transcribed.

In periods of times between interviews, I was looking for key events, themes, possible plots, epiphanies, and metaphors. Each subsequent interview was scheduled in order to start

looking for meaning and thick description of the life stories. This progressive-regressive technique of zooming in and out allows for a flexible and evolving process during the data collection process (Czarniawska, 2004). In addition to my central question, “What does it mean to be a foreign-born woman in a leadership position in a higher education institution in the United States?” I used subsequent questions for further illustration. My intention was to keep the meetings as free flowing as possible in order to gather a true life story of the participant.

Data Analysis Procedures

For data analysis, I considered two approaches: Creswell’s model (2006) and Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) model. Creswell’s (2006) model suggests that analysis is not only “custom-built” (p. 15); and it involved six steps of framework: data managing, reading memos, describing, classifying, interpreting, and representing or visualizing.

The Clandinin and Connelly (2000) framework employs three elements: “collecting personal experiences in the form of field texts such as interviews or conversations, retelling and rewriting the stories into a chronological sequence, and incorporating the setting or place of the particular experiences” (p. 158). While reviewing and coding data, the Clandinin and Connelly (2000) approach seemed like a natural choice for this particular study, as it became apparent from the way the participant organized events around plots during the interview process. With every life event, she brought up interwoven components of other related events and pieced them together.

Initially, I had planned to use an electronic software for qualitative research data analysis. As I started reviewing the collected data, I felt that in order for me to stay closely connected to the story, I decided to immerse myself in the details of the story in order to get a sense of the meaning of the lived experience. I slowly read and re-read transcribed data as well as the field

notes. I also researched about the country of Eva's origin to better understand connections. After reading the transcripts for the third time, I was able to identify general themes, for example: family, roots, and career. This approach is called open coding (Neuman, 2007). For this preliminary theme selection, I used side notes. As I read, I wrote general themes next to the appropriate section.

After identifying the general themes, I started narrowing down to smaller and more precise ideas that naturally were drawn together. At that point, I used colored tabs and large sheets of paper to identify and compile relating events and experiences. Using this analysis step called coding, I was able to note emerging relationships as familiar themes started to cluster together. I also identified a few themes (i.e., extended family) that I chose not to include in this study due to a time limitation. In addition, I kept a running list of questions as a guide for the next narrative interview.

Selective coding was the third step in qualitative data analysis (Neuman, 2007). Once I had the major theme and then smaller, core categories of themes, I started looking for events and behaviors that fit into each category. For example, open coding identified "family" to be a major theme. "Spouse" was the subcategory (axial coding), and then I asked the question, "What is the difference between having a supportive and non-supportive spouse?" Identifying the participant's narratives, I was able to compare the differences (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework from Clandinin & Connelly (2000)



During the analysis process, just as during the collection process, I made sure to use similar strategies for validating findings. First, I verified any questionable information against audio and written records as well as my field notes. In addition, I asked the participant to review any questionable areas.

Ethical Issues During Qualitative Research Data Collection

The qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that may present themselves in field during the data collection and data analysis processes that go well beyond the safeguarding of human subjects as described in the informed consent procedures. In addition to changing name of the participant to Eva, I used pseudonyms for all individuals involved in the story, and I made sure that no original country was revealed by being too specific about events that provided context to the participant's story. I omitted names of institutions and states, with the exception of New York, because of its size and its multiple ethnic demographics. The participant requested that I refer to her position as leader.

In one instance where my participant expressed a concern about being recorded, she changed her mind and stated that it would be acceptable. Two other instances (her son's health issue and her sister's death) that contained emotionally loaded topics were not audio recorded; I depended solely on my field notes during and immediately after the interview.

During all of the narrative sessions, I made sure to disclaim that I would not press for any information she did not feel comfortable to reveal, and I kept that promise. I was also cognizant of how much of my story I shared with her, as I did not want her story to be affected with mine. Such practices not only protect the participant; they protect also the integrity of qualitative research (Creswell, 2006).

Role of the Researcher

When using narrative inquiry methodology, it is difficult to say that the researcher is completely objective or neutral. Instead, the researcher chooses many aspects of the research with different levels of subjectivity. The process starts with choosing the topic and desired outcomes, and it continues with identification of the participant, questions, and direction in which the research is led. Once the data are collected, the researcher's framework affects how the data are analyzed and presented, especially in qualitative research. All of these aspects may be affected by the researcher's perception and personal beliefs and values, as well as family upbringing and education.

Utilization of narrative inquiry methodology brings another angle, that is, the researcher may eventually become a part of the story. Narrative inquiry methodology implies that the researcher will immerse herself/himself into the narrator's (participant's) story to the point that it becomes unclear to whom the story belongs. More so, some researchers suggest that only a person who has experienced similar events can fully understand and, therefore, evaluate the true

meaning of life events of the participant. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) maintained that the researcher's pertinent autobiography is one of the "starting points" (p. 70) in narrative inquiry. While sharing his or her own (pertinent) life story, the researcher moves "within three-dimensional space" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 70) and oscillates between "personal and social" components of the story while "living, telling and retelling" the story. This self-reflection and self-awareness is crucial during data collection as well as during the data analysis phase, because as much as both the participant's and researcher's stories will intersect, the researcher must remain clear so as not to influence the participant(s).

I am aware that my own background lends to operating with a certain level of preconceived notion; however, I tried to minimize its effect on this research. Another aspect I had to keep in mind was that my explanation of events might not be congruent with the way the participant believed she told the story (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). I am a political refugee to the United States. Due to the illegal departure from my country, I was unable to bring any personal documentation with me to the United States. Even though I obtained a nursing degree in my home country, I have earned associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees, and now I am in the process of completing my doctoral degree in the United States. This study was a part of the requirements for completion of the Doctorate of Education degree from George Fox University. As such, it was important for me to complete this study in a timely manner.

At the time of this study, I served as an academic administrator in a higher education institution. My interest in this particular topic arose from a serendipitous meeting with another foreign-born professional woman who was pursuing a teaching career at my institution about four years prior to my embarking on this topic. The job interview turned out to be a sharing of

life stories and looking for similarities and differences. Eventually, she chose not to pursue the teaching position, but her story remained with me and became an impetus for this study.

Potential Contribution of the Research

The reason for the particular topic of this study was to gain understanding of why some foreign-born women are highly successful. Another reason was to expand on the scholarly work about foreign-born women by bringing a dimension of success, high academic achievements, and professional academic leadership. As the initial literature review on the topic of foreign-born women in academe showed, there is a dire need for expanding not only breadth but especially depth of research on this topic.

Even though results of this study cannot be generalized, I hope that some general concepts may provide tools for the next generations of foreign-born women. I believe that education is a key to creating a better society, one that is highly comparable in the global market.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Introduction

This narrative study investigated in depth the life story of one foreign-born woman who serves in the role of administrator in a higher education institution in the United States. The ultimate goal was to provide some answers to the question, “What does it mean to be a foreign-born woman in a leadership position in a higher education institution in the United States?”

Additional questions to which I searched for answers were:

1. What are the challenges and advantages of being a foreign-born woman administrator in higher education in the United States?
2. What experiences and events took place in your life that contributed to your decision to follow a career path to higher education?
3. In what ways are you similar and what ways are you different than other foreign-born women you know?

A literature review revealed a considerable body of research about immigration. Often, though, immigration was investigated by members of the dominant culture, not immigrants themselves. In addition, immigrants were presented as a societal group, rarely as individuals, regardless of their reasons for resettlement or means of arrival. Immigration is often examined from a dimension of dependency and reciprocity between an immigrant and society. Personal accounts by immigrants are still scarce, especially those that offer women’s experiences and perspectives through the immigration process. Women experience immigration and adaptation to a new way of living differently than men, because women often do not join the workforce but remain dependent on their significant other. They are expected to take care of the family while

their male partner is expected to provide for the family. In addition, much of the immigration research is done from a “deficit paradigm, emphasizing difficulties and pathologizing aspects of relocation from a problem-oriented frame of reference” (Berger, 2004, p. 28).

This study attempted to offset immigration perspectives that are faceless and gender-less. While there is some published research concerning women’s issues associated with immigration, very few studies offer accounts of foreign-born women who are successful. The woman selected for this study is a mother, a scholar, a practical and theoretical researcher, and a leader at a higher education institution in the United States.

Aspects that qualified the participant for this study included (a) foreign-born woman with doctoral degree (earned either in the United States or country of origin), (b) serving as an administrator in a higher education institution in the United States, (c) facing some kind of persecution or peril in the country of origin if returned to live there, and (d) is not planning to return to live and retire in the country of origin. In addition, participant’s residence within an acceptable distance to my residence was an important criterion due to time constraints to conduct multiple face-to-face interviews in addition to audio and online media interviews.

Participant Identification

The participant selection process included my personal and professional local networks, local immigration organizations, and online nonprofessional and professional social networks. Out of eight potential candidates, I chose the one I located as the last one after about two months’ long search. Eva’s country of origin and initial information provided me with enough evidence to believe that her story would provide rich content for this study. Our initial meeting was delayed by about three months due to her son’s life-threatening illness. Once Eva was ready for her first interview, we finalized the time and location. All of our face-to-face meetings

happened at the same location. The rest of the information was gathered by multiple phone conversations and e-mails.

The content of all interviews was audio recorded. In addition, I took notes during the interviews and documented the process and any other thoughts in my notes immediately after each interview. Contents of each interview were transcribed and I used them to prepare my next series of questions and areas of interest for our next interview. Once the information was gathered and transcribed, I read and re-read the narrative and proceeded to report. As I completed sections, I sent them to Eva to ascertain that the data captured are correct.

How We Met

We met in the university location dedicated to students, visitors, researchers, and families requiring housing. I made sure that the two digital voice recorders had enough batteries and that I had my guiding questions ready.

Eva arrived about two hours late, apologizing for unexpected emergencies at work. She prepared a cup of green tea at the reception area. A petite, slender woman with short black hair, dressed in black and white hues, she wore name identification and a pager around her neck partially hidden under her scarf. Simple white pearl earrings and a strand of pearls around her neck completed her outfit. She addressed me first when I came to meet her at the busy reception area, certain it was me although we had not exchanged any photos.

In the room, she chose a chair that would support her back even though I offered her a big cushioned chair. For approximately the first 50 minutes we discussed her son's emergency from about three months ago, his recovery, and rehabilitation. I sensed that she wanted to talk about this from the way she answered my initial (not at all obligatory) inquiry about his health. I did not record this part of the interview. I was genuinely interested in her son's recovery

process, remembering when my daughter fought for her life, and I felt it would help to build trust between us. During that conversation it became very clear to me that not a professional, but a concerned mother was sharing her love for her son. Later, we shared a meal delivered to the room as we initiated the actual interview by reviewing the IRB form, addressing her only concern about confidentiality of all data, and both of us signing it.

The actual recorded interview lasted close to two hours. During that time I asked prepared guide questions, but most questions surfaced during the narrative interview itself. I asked a few probing questions as well; however, I chose to listen to her story with minimal interruption this first time. At one point when she spoke of the sudden loss of her sister, her voice broke, her hands started shaking, and her eyes filled with tears. I stopped recording at that point. It took her only a short time to compose herself and we continued for the next 30 minutes with a discussion about her sister's life and their relationship, without recording. I sensed that this was another topic that needed to be shared without recording.

In total, the first meeting lasted nearly four hours; we completed it just before ten o'clock that evening. Although she had spent a busy day at work and then four hours with me, she never looked at her watch, never sounded like she was in a hurry. Often, she would take time to think before she answered my question. She ate slowly and spoke eloquently. She looked and sounded calm, confident, humble, and proud at the same time. Before she left, she hugged me; that seemed natural for her. As I sat down to start writing my field notes, there was a knock on the door—Eva had come back for her coffee mug in which she had brought her tea. Then she was off to join her oldest son, who was waiting for her all this time, to be on their way home, about 40 minutes away.

Your Roots Are Who You Are

Born in a country in Central America as one of four children, Eva grew up on a coffee plantation owned by her maternal grandfather. The first seven years of her life, she lived with her grandparents and her mother. She expressed a deep love and admiration for her grandparents. She said,

. . . the support that I got from them (grandparents) was just incredible, and the focus.

My grandmother was always helping people. They had, they owned a coffee plantation (in my country), and so when the political situation became so bad in the mid-'70s, that's why my grandparents had to flee the country.

They settled in a metropolis on the East Coast of the United States. I found Eva's description of her grandparents rather charming. Her grandmother was:

a tiny little woman, but she was strong as a horse. She was so determined. And my grandfather was, he was 6'1", very tall man, and just incredibly handsome, and just a sweet, he was like this big teddy bear, and he was married to this tiny little woman who was just absolutely dominating! And he's so sweet, all the time, anything she said went. So it was a matriarch kind of a scenario, but when Grandpa spoke, that was it. We all knew, you know, he laid the law.

Eva shared many tender memories of her grandfather. “. . . he always loved his people . . . everyone who worked for him in that coffee plantation; they absolutely loved him, because he was very fair to all his workers . . .” Her grandfather was unlike country natives. He was “very tall, blond, light blond hair . . . green eyes, very fair skin, and compared to them everybody's, about five feet, and here was Grampa, so he would stick out like a sore thumb.”

Eva's parents divorced when she was about one year old. Eva's mother never remarried, although she was 27 years old at the time of divorce. ". . . she never really wanted to bring another man in the house. She was terrified of that, because she had two girls . . . so she decided, 'I'm not going to do that.'" As Eva's mother struggled to raise four children by herself, help came from grandparents only two months after they relocated to the United States, "'We need the kids here, and so let's start with the youngest.' So both my brother and I were literally sent to New York, and that's how my life began in the United States." Eva was seven years old.

At that time, Eva's grandparents became hers, her brother's, and her two male cousins' parents. Eva started to learn English ("I didn't know a word of English!") as she enrolled in private school. She loved her studies. As a "nerd almost tattooed to her forehead," as Eva called herself, "boys would not come near me." Teenage years were difficult for Eva. "Growing up in New York made it very difficult to not know who you were, because you knew you were an immigrant." She was expected to hang out with her own ethnicity groups. This segregation was more pronounced especially during her high school years. She struggled to find her own groups and blend in among the rest of her classmates, but it was not easy. She tried to fit by being a cheerleader, although sports were not really her thing, and participating in the marching band playing a clarinet. She finally felt like she belonged.

Eva's grandfather made sure that the children retained and kept learning Spanish as well. She related:

My grandfather made us at home . . . he would not have any English spoken at home. And so we would . . . because I grew up with my younger brother and my two cousins, two boys, so we would speak English amongst ourselves, but as soon as Grandpa walked into the room, "Whoa!" So he ruled, he ruled. And so, but that helped me, so I was able

to keep up with my skills, with my Spanish skills, and then he would also make us read the newspaper in Spanish out loud and write a paragraph or two. And that gave me my writing skills, because how would I have writing skills in Spanish?

As I learned later, Spanish fluency came in handy when she returned to her native country to study medicine.

As a budding young woman in a new country, Eva received tremendous support from her grandparents, particularly her grandfather.

And my grandfather always . . . he was such a gentleman, that he would, that was the one thing he always talked about, was respecting women, giving them, all the support that they needed to be as successful as you, as a male, and that there was absolutely no abuse, no abuse towards women. And he would say that over and over again to the three boys, which is my brother and my two cousins. And one time, you know how kids are, my cousin, who was the oldest, really of all of us, we must have been doing something and I must have done something, and he hits me right in the back. He hit me right in the back so it knocked the air out of me. And my grandfather walked in. Oh my gosh, he could not believe it! And so he said, "I've told you from Day One, there's absolutely no hitting of women, at all. It doesn't matter if she hits you first. You just don't raise your hand to any woman, and that includes young girls, and includes your cousin, and she's basically your sister." And my cousin never forgot that!

Growing up in this supportive environment, Eva started designing her career path. The inspiration seemed to arrive from her grandmother. Growing up on the coffee plantation, even at the age of four, Eva remembered her grandmother as a caregiver to all workers at the plantation.

I remember Gramma just always helping, giving injections, giving medicine out, so as a child you don't know what to think of that other than, you know "She's, she's helping." Right? So I think maybe that's where I, maybe that's where my interest grew in medicine is watching Gramma take care of people.

Witnessing her grandmother assisting with births and giving injections, Eva not only imitated her when playing with her dolls as a little girl, she decided to start her career as a certified nursing aide while in junior high school. Eva reminisces:

I literally started my medical career as a clinical certified nurse assistant, so I did a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program in high school. And I've always, I've always in my mind knew that science was what I wanted to do, and then I always felt like I could, I could be with people.

She continued to work as a CNA throughout most of her junior year in high school. As a senior, she joined by invitation the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program, and upon completion, she continued to work as a full-time LPN in a nursing home. The private school that Eva attended offered these two programs to their students without additional tuition charges. For Eva, this was exactly what she wanted to do: to help people, just like her grandmother did. Eva not only completed her CNA training and started working in the evening shift in a nursing home, she was also recognized as a dedicated worker and was asked to join an LPN program that the school was piloting at that time. For Eva, this was a great opportunity and she took advantage of it. In order to do that, Eva rearranged her school schedule to be finished so that she could work her shift from three in the afternoon until eleven o'clock at night.

By the time she graduated, Eva realized that even though she loved helping people, she would not be able to continue in that line of work. Not only physically, she said, while

repositioning herself in the chair to ease her back, but “I wanted to do more. I just felt like I could do a lot more than what I’m doing right now.”

Eva’s mother, who arrived to attend her high school graduation, seemed to help to solve that dilemma when she asked, “When are you starting college?” Eva emphasized the “when,” instead of “are you?” which did not surprise me because during our conversation, Eva mentioned that her grandparents were supportive of education and “that’s what they would talk about every day.” This seemed to be contrary to her report about low literacy in her native country contributing to a high level of poverty. She remained calm, almost sad, when she said,

I think . . . (my country), it is a beautiful place, I love it, and it’s my country where I was born, but I don’t feel like I can . . . be there and live there, just because in my mind right now the differences are too big for me . . .

Eva had her heart set on studying to become a doctor. She saw her grandmother helping people and she wanted to do the same. Her mom helped Eva to make a decision when she asked Eva to bring boxes to help her to pack and go back to the native country to study medicine. Eva’s concerns about the intensity of a medical program did not resonate with her mother. “Well, don’t worry about it. You can come home with me, and I’ll help you. And, you know, the school is there, it’s a great university for, you know, for medical school. So we’ll just do that.”

Eva lived with her mother for about seven years, while she attended medical school. According to Eva, her mom was a very hard worker. She would get up at five o’clock in the morning and worked sometimes until nine o’clock at night. Although a trained teacher, her mom became an entrepreneur. She started a business similar to paralegal services and began serving immigration and police departments. She became very successful, successful enough to support

Eva throughout seven years of medical school. Eva's mother was very customer oriented, "she had very much of my grandma," a focused, dedicated, very fast thinker. She had her way with people; "she would meet someone one day, and next day you know, they're best friends."

Although Eva grew up with her grandparents, her mother kept a strong presence in her life.

Eva's mother, divorced with four small children at the age of 27, built a successful life for herself and for them. Today she still holds assets back in the native country.

For a short while we just continued eating our salads. Eva ordered Caribbean salad and I had quesadilla explosion salad. I watched her picking through grilled chicken pieces to cut a smaller piece using a very small black plastic knife. She had small, delicate hands with short, meticulously filed nails. She washed them before starting dinner. She asked my permission to unpack a small bar of soap provided by the hotel. I noticed that she wore her wedding band on her right hand and her engagement ring on her left hand, just like I used to see and wear back in my country. When a couple is engaged, the wedding ring is placed on the woman's left hand, and once married, it is moved to the right hand. I liked the similarity.

At 17, Eva moved back to her native country to enroll in a medical school. From the way she spoke about her experience and how her face lit up, I guessed she enjoyed talking about it. She shared with me that the medical school was one of the oldest and most established in the country. She also believed that she would receive more hands-on training than she would have had in any medical school in the United States, which was intriguing to her at that time. The university offered large classrooms and labs at its "very huge campus." More importantly, her education was fully funded by her mother, which would not have been possible if she would have decided to study in the United States.

Beginnings were not easy for her because of the language barrier. Even though Eva returned to her country of birth, her Spanish language skills were not at the college level. Eva left her native country at the age of seven, and despite the fact that they were required to speak Spanish language at home in New York, the eloquence of her Spanish language was not at the pre-med level; neither was her writing, even with her grandfather's help. “. . . And then he would also make us read the newspaper in Spanish out loud and write a paragraph or two. And that gave me my writing skills, because how would I have writing skills in Spanish?”

I could relate to the language struggle. I experienced it once, when I arrived in the United States without any language skills and had to learn the language. Eva experienced it twice: first, when she arrived in the United States and had to learn English, and then a second time, when she returned back home to study medicine with only basic Spanish language skills that needed to be adapted to the level of a college student.

Eva continued to struggle with the language during the first year in pre-med school.

“Oh my gosh! This is a beast! I can't handle the language difference.” Because I would hear some in chemistry classes, I would hear them in Spanish, but then in my mind they were, some of the things were backwards, because I was thinking in English all the time. In addition, her classmates called her “gringa” and a foreigner because of her English accent. “Because they could tell . . . and I would use some of the words in English and substitute them right into Spanish, and that didn't work.”

It was not until she found a great study partner who helped her to find a solid ground in her studies that Eva began gaining confidence.

She [the study partner] was much focused . . . she would tell me, “Take it easy. One step at a time. Read it again, and write it down.” I would tell her, “I understand it, but I can’t, I can’t, if they ask me how to explain this, I can’t do it in Spanish.” “Do it again.”

With her study partner, Eva completed her first year, while watching about one third of her classmates leaving. As the second year came about, Eva started feeling “different attitude, and then it got better. And I loved it. So it was, it was . . . a lot of fun for me.” Some of the instructors became her role models; she wanted to be like them “when I grow up.” As the third year rolled in, Eva lost about two thirds of her classmates. By that time, she had established herself as a dedicated, focused student, had become a member of student council, and had become best friends with her original study partner. They graduated together and remained friends throughout the years.

Eva did not think twice about how to answer my question about who else helped her to get through medical school. Without hesitation she said:

My mother’s support, my family’s support, and the fact that my grandparents, because they literally raised us . . . my grandparents were always there. When my mom went back [to the native country], my grandmother and grandfather were really our parents.

As Eva kept her story going, I could not help but start seeing some resemblances among her grandmother, her mother, and Eva. I wanted to know how much of her grandmother and mother are in Eva. Eva simply responded, “I see myself as my gramma and I see myself as my mother. So they both have given me probably that love and that caring feeling that I carry at all times.” Just like Eva’s grandmother, so was her mother—incredibly kind. She enjoyed being of service. While living in the native country, not only had she become a leader of an organization that helps to collect eyeglasses to assist people with ophthalmological problems, she was willing

to give up the family cemetery slot to a family that could not afford to bury their child. She also became an advocate for poor people and helped to raise funds to help anyone in need. Eva sounded very serious when she said, “People trusted her.” Then she added,

As an adult I got to see that with her, and as a child I got to see part of that in my grandmother and in my grandfather. He was always very, very kind. So I think that’s how I see both of them in me. I feel like I definitely have a big part of both of them. I feel in my heart that I’m a Latina woman and I know I’m very proud of that.

Soul Mate

When I asked Eva what keeps her going, she simply said, “The love for my partner.” They have been married 25 years and have five children together. She described him as kind, helpful, supportive, sharing, and a good leader, even though originally she labeled him as “conceited.” He was also a gentleman and very polite. The first two or three years of their friendship, he addressed Eva formally, using “usted” to reflect respect and reservations. Eva shared with me that all of her five children have been raised in a similar manner: respectful and polite.

They met at the medical school where he was one of almost 1,200 students starting with Eva. It was not until about the third year of “eying each other out” when they started talking. Her sincere laugh interrupted her recollections as she touched her wedding band, and then she continued. Once they started their clinical rotations, Eva learned why the children, patients, and family members of patients loved Dr. Diego. She said, “If he was there, they all wanted to go with him, and then we figured out why . . . because he always had pockets full of candy.”

At this point, Eva seemed relaxed and appeared to be enjoying her own story. She added a smile or laughter more often as she reminisced about the time they entered their third year and

started their clinical training. She seemed to particularly enjoy a story about when she ended up as the only female student with nine male students at one clinical site. One of them was Diego. She recalled,

So I see, I continue to see the classmates coming in, and just men are coming in. I couldn't believe it. I'm sitting there in my chair just dying, thinking, I'm going to be the only girl in this group. I can't believe they did this to me! So all of a sudden I turned around, and who do I see come in? Diego! I'm like, "Oh great! And I'm here with this conceited guy!"

Eva busted into laughter. She continued with her story, relating that Diego self-pronounced himself to be the leader of the group. She thought at the time, "Oh great, now I'll have to listen to his orders!" When she said that, we both started laughing uncontrollably as Eva's laughter got to me. It was getting late, and she had worked all day, yet she was full of energy not only for herself but others as well.

Eva and Diego continued on with their relationship as classmates while they dated other people. However, Eva started enjoying Diego's wit, ability to cook ("He can cook!"), more so when she joined Diego and two other classmates in sharing an apartment to avoid long bus rides. She recalled, "Those busses were just zzzzz zzzzz zzz through mountains," with bus drivers that "drive like mad." Two weeks of the bus experiences prompted Eva to ask her mother for permission to share an apartment with her classmates. Her mom said, "Okay, well, let's go look at it." Eva went on:

So we went and looked at it, she met the group. There was another young lady as part of the group and this incredible young man, just absolutely nice person, and then Diego. And so she meets Diego, and Diego's very polite and respectful . . . And Mom's like,

“Oh, I think you’re going to be okay. Alright, we can do this.” So she allows me.

Here’s a fourth-year medical student asking permission! But that’s the way it is! You don’t just take off, right? So Mom allows me to do that.

Studying and living in close proximity with Diego, Eva started comparing him to her current boyfriend. Although serious and formal at work or school, Diego turned out to be kind and caring at home. It was her mother’s approval to date Diego after she broke up with her old boyfriend that started their romantic relationship. She said, “And then things just happened, and he’s never left my side since! . . . and he continues to be the same.”

Diego graduated a few months before Eva. Eva completed her thesis in October and got married to Diego in November. Once again, she obeyed her mother, who said, “‘You can’t get married until you have your diploma in one hand and the ring on the other.’ So I said, ‘Okay!’” Another burst of laughter shattered the air in the small hotel room. I wondered for a short second what time it was because I started feeling guilty about keeping Eva this long. She still did not show one sign of fatigue or sneak a peek at her wristwatch. Once we calmed down, she shared perhaps one of the most tender memories of her grandfather, who walked her “down the altar.” Eva’s parents divorced when she was very young and her father, who remarried and had a second family, kept some contact with Eva. However, by the time of Eva’s wedding, her father was tragically deceased and her grandfather’s stepping into this role seemed to be just natural. She said,

The fact that it was my grandfather walking me down to the altar, that was incredible.

My mom keeps telling me, “You really had them go the full circle with them. They raised you, they saw you as their child, not really their grandchild, you followed what Dad [grandfather] would tell you all the time, and you graduated and made them proud

and then you got married, and he was able to give your hand away.” So my mom says, “You really did everything that Grampa wanted you to do.” And that . . . I don’t know that that’s what I did exactly, because it was what I wanted to do, but I guess it definitely influenced who I became because of how he was with me, just very loving, very caring, and not ever a raising of the voice or scolding me for things. If anything, he protected me from everything! Including my brother and cousins!

Eva believes that Diego is her soul mate. At one point in her career she had an opportunity to join her mentor and collaborator at one of the most prestigious research universities in the United States. The decision was difficult because at that time she had just established her career on the West Coast and had three young sons. Diego reflected his support in a few simple words, “Okay, we can do that. We can move . . . , but we have to see if it is really going to work for us. And remember, it’s a couple, it’s a couple moving, it’s not just you.”

She enjoys having a common ground and interests with her husband. Eva said of working together:

[It] has made me who I am right now, because he understands that this is a career path and so is his. And we support each other . . . whatever he has to do, I mean, we just manage it, and we do it, whatever needs to get done for him. And the same thing, I think, if I was kind of in a different world, married to somebody else who couldn’t really relate to medicine, I think I’d be a different person. I don’t think I would have that support, because we support each other continuously. It’s not one stepping over the other. It’s together. Any time we can do something together, as a training, as professional growth, we do it. Because his interests are almost identical as mine.

Eva’s comment, “If I would be somewhere else, it would be a whole different story,”

triggered my next question. Earlier she mentioned her dating a classmate who, even though her mother agreed for Eva to date, she really did not approve of. I wanted to know whether she believes her life would have taken a significantly different path if she would have stayed with him.

She bent over my recorder and stated her concern about whether that information would be shared. Before I was able to answer that I turned the recorder off, and she started laughing. I looked at her face and I saw a flash of surprise mixing with self-satisfaction. Once we stopped laughing, she shared her suspicion that if she would have married him instead of Diego, she would probably be alone by now. She shared his fear of competition with Eva and lack of support for a woman's career. He wanted to be always the first. She said, "I couldn't be higher than where he was. And he knew I could get there." Eva also shared a more current instance in which she met her former boyfriend, now a very successful scholar in one of the northeastern research institutions. She said that she was happy to see him, "but I think he was shocked to see where I was, which was a little confusing." Partners can "pull you up or push you down," said Eva as she complimented my husband for being at home while I was meeting her. Being in a relationship where two people are not supporting each other can "take your energy out, it's wasting emotionally."

At that time, she referred to her deceased sister, who was a reason for Eva to move west. Her sister, who was very caring toward strangers in her line of work, could not be herself at home. Eva believes that the abuse her sister had to endure in her life made her waste emotionally, and even though she died of pneumonia, she died from loneliness regardless of the support of entire family. The one person who mattered the most—her husband—was not supportive of her.

Eva and her husband are planning to renew their wedding vows in the month of November this year. They are not sure yet whether they should have the ceremony in the United States or in their native country. She is facing a dilemma because most of the family now lives in the United States, but it was back home where her grandfather walked her to the altar. One thing she knows, though, and that is who will walk her down the altar this time: her son Sebastian. Sebastian, who was the reason why our first interview was delayed three months . . .

The Lady with Scarf and Pearl Earrings

Sebastian, Eva's second oldest son, was in his first pre-med year. He was an active athlete and a good student who found an internship at the same research hospital where Eva worked. Eva's closest collaborator became Sebastian's supervisor. Sebastian worked long hours to make sure he met his goal of studying medicine like his parents.

One morning, Sebastian became ill. He had fever, chills, and overall body weakness. This went on for a few days until Eva made him see a doctor. Sebastian received treatment and continued with his school and internship schedule. The high fever came back with a vengeance after a short time, and this time it would not go away. Sebastian tried to continue with treatment and his normal life and school activities; however, he lost a lot of weight and became weak. And then it happened.

Sebastian's roommate was awakened in the early morning hours by a strange sound, of someone having a hard time breathing. First he thought that it was a dream, but listening more attentively, he realized that it was Sebastian struggling for oxygen. He ran to Sebastian's room and saw him in severe distress and pain. He immediately called Eva. Eva and her husband rushed to Sebastian's residence, where they were joined by their oldest son, Juan. Sebastian was transported to the hospital's critical care unit. By that afternoon, he had undergone brain surgery

to release pressure from a bleeding vessel. He was diagnosed with a stroke at the age of 20, which had resulted from a blood clot that became loose due to endocarditis, or inflammation inside the lining of the heart. According to Eva, during Sebastian's regular dental appointment, bacterial mouth flora seeped into the bloodstream and caused the endocarditis.

Sebastian fought for life for the next few days. During that time Eva remained at his bedside. Diego took care of the rest of the children and other family affairs and visited often. Once doctors allowed visitors, family members came to Sebastian: all of his siblings, his grandparents, and closest friends. Even his supervisor, Eva's colleague, came to visit.

Little by little, Sebastian started recognizing the faces of his visitors, all of them, except one. There was a face of a petite woman, with dark hair, that he could not fit anywhere. She was always there . . . was it a nurse or a doctor? Why would she not leave? She looked very tired and worried all the time. She was there when his father visited. She was there when his grandparents came to see him. She even sat there when his siblings and friends came to cheer him up. She just sat there, always keeping her eyes focused on his face and body, almost controlling what he was doing. He asked his father, "Who is that woman?" Diego answered with a question, "You do not know?" "No, I do not," Sebastian responded. Diego invited Sebastian to look at the woman and asked him, "What do you see she is wearing?" "She is wearing a scarf. She always wears a scarf," said Sebastian. "Yes," answered Diego. "What else is she wearing?" Sebastian looked at the woman's face and recognized small round white pearl earrings. They provided a great contrast to her black hair. "She wears white earrings!" he said. Diego agreed, and then he asked, "So who do you know that always wears a scarf and white pearl earrings?"

Sebastian suddenly looked puzzled, trying to figure out who that woman could be. For a few moments he was deep in thought, evaluating people he knew, people who knew him, and then he more stated than asked, “Mom?”

I watched Eva’s face very closely. Nothing in her face changed but I know her heart skipped a beat and she forgot to breathe. I know that her mother’s heart started bleeding again because she came close to the wound that will never heal. It was very clear to me that Eva would give her life for Sebastian. I remembered her sharing how she would take her children to work because she was scared to death of strange people taking care of her children. I remembered her saying how her world changed when her first son was born.

Her son, the one she would give up her life for, could not recognize her. After his surgery and slow recovery, Sebastian was able to remember everyone except his own mother. It felt like she did not breathe until she finished this particular episode; I am not sure if I breathed. I tried to put myself in her shoes. I remember still very vividly when my daughter woke up after her experimental heart surgery; it was only the tubes exiting her tiny four-year-old body that held her back when she opened her little arms toward me. She saw me and wanted to come to my arms. That is when she was born the second time.

Eva did not experience anything like that. Her son almost died, and when he finally was ready to return to the world of those who loved him, he gathered everyone in his mind and his heart, except his own mother. I felt deep pain in my heart for Eva as she paused, a pain that perhaps only a mother, who almost lost her child, can understand.

The hotel room got suddenly quiet; it had been dark outside for a while. The workers remodeling the hotel were long gone, and I could hear the calm humming of the heater unit. None of my two digital recorders were recording this part of Eva’s story. This part of the story

was shared by the heart of a mother and recorded by the heart of another mother; there was no place for technology. I was glad that I had not insisted on recording her son's story; I know now that I would have lost a lot by recording it. Perhaps it does not make sense now, but it made sense then.

Eva slowly took a long breath, repositioned herself in the hard office chair, the only office chair in the room. She looked at me. I saw a scar in her heart, clear and deep. Her face remained unchanged and her eyes were focused on my face, when she said, "It is okay. My son is alive, and that is all that matters."

Sebastian continues to keep working on gaining his previous life back, including the use of his right arm. Eva attends to his physical therapy schedule as often as she can. She politely declined a second interview the next day, because Sebastian was able to get an appointment with a physical therapist and she wanted to join him. This path is not easy, not only for Eva, but also for Sebastian's younger siblings. They are able to recognize that Sebastian is different; the intracranial hemorrhage left only limited use of his right arm. Eva was reminded by one of her coworkers (and Sebastian's supervisor) that it is all right to grieve. Sebastian as she knew him died. There is now a new Sebastian. Eva is wholeheartedly and entirely grateful for the new Sebastian, but she misses the old one.

Eva spent a considerable length of time discussing how the entire family is adjusting to the new Sebastian. Even Sebastian himself is adjusting. According to Eva, one of the concerns that he keeps bringing up is a delay of medical school entry. I wondered how much of Eva's determination is in Sebastian.

With her son Sebastian, Eva has five children and a successful career. She acknowledged that having five children is the biggest job she has had. She also said that it is harder today for a

woman to raise a family, especially a larger family. From time to time, she would get “raised eyebrows” from her colleagues when she got pregnant, because they knew she would be gone at least six weeks. There is no doubt in my mind that motherhood is an integral part of who she is. I remember her saying that her world turned around 360 degrees when her first son was born. She went further, though; she demanded respect for a new mother despite career pressures and an interrupted career path. Eva said:

When you’re trying to have a child, I think there’s got to be some respect for that.

Respect for new life, and for that mother who has just given birth, which is not an easy thing to do, and now her body has to heal, has to recover, and still has to nourish.

Eva stays connected to her children. She attends their extracurricular activities anytime she gets a chance. If she cannot, her husband or an older sibling will record the event and then Eva watches it later. She feels content, even though she may miss a few activities, because her career success will result in her being a better mother and a better partner for her husband. Eva believes that “children are your legacy” and therefore she tries to provide a supporting, loving, and encouraging environment as often as possible. “There’s nothing else out there after you’re gone, everybody will forget you after a few months, but your children can keep some of that with them,” Eva concluded.

I Love to Love

“Helena!” a voice carried over the busy hotel reception air. I turned my head and saw a petite woman dressed in a black leather jacket, black slacks, and pumps. A black and white animal-print scarf almost covered her pager and the name identification tag from the hospital where she works. Small white pearl earrings and a strand of pearls around her neck added to the classy look of this middle-aged Latina woman. Short black hair framed her bright brown eyes as

she poured hot water into a coffee mug containing one green tea bag. I had to wonder for a second how she knew it was me, because the reception area was full of visitors, students, and workers.

I watched Eva stir her tea while I fixed myself a cup of green tea as well. It was a cold winter evening; every time someone opened the front door, about fifteen degrees Fahrenheit of cold air rushed in. We took an elevator to the second floor to my hotel room.

I watched Eva closely during our face-to-face interviews. I made a mental note of her facial expressions and her hand and body movements as she shared what it means for her to lead two research teams. I watched her eyes when she talked about her son's life-threatening experience and when she discussed some of her patients and their parents. I saw similar sadness, but I also saw fire. I watched how she would gently touch her wedding band when she mentioned her husband.

Eva's ambitions arise from her need to care for people. She wants to help people around her, whether it is her family, her colleagues, her patients, or her students. She can lead and she can be led; she assumes a spot wherever her team needs her. She said it very simply: "I love to be there for people in need." She takes her responsibility very seriously.

I need to do what I need to do for a cause, and if that means getting more and more people involved to support what it is that we're trying to do, then I just go out there and do it. So I think I'm a very enthusiastic person, I'm a very loving person. I love to love.

She is also very transparent. She does not like to play games, and she does not carry hidden agendas. She shares her feelings with ease, not only with her family and friends, but with strangers as well, for which I was a great example. I felt honored, not only because Eva agreed

to participate in this study, but also because she shared her life with me with undeniable authenticity. She included me in the circle of people who have helped her to become:

. . . a person that you can count on and you can reach out to, and you are going to have for sure all the support that you're looking for and the assistance, the help you need. If I can't do it, I find somebody to do it, because I can't do everything.

Eva described herself as caring and ambitious:

[My] ambition has nothing to do with wealth. My ambition comes from within, or, bettering myself by doing. I see myself as being simple because all I really strive to do and want to do is to be able to provide assistance, service.

Her career seems to lend itself to her need for service to others. From the very beginning of her career, Eva expressed her satisfaction, starting with her work as a certified nursing assistant and then continuing as a licensed practical nurse. Later, in medical school, once she had "survived" her first two years, she found her fit and she "loved it." While in medical school, she found the love of her life and together they now have five children. There were times when Eva would take her children to work with her because she was afraid of hiring a bad babysitter. Often, her husband would join her as well.

Throughout her life, she has enjoyed the support of her family: first her grandparents, who became her parents for a while, followed by her mother, who, while Eva lived in the United States, built her business to the point that she was able to support Eva during her studies in medical school. Once married, Eva found support in her husband and five children. She shared with me how her every triumph is celebrated by her entire family. Her success is their success. When I asked her if she is happy with her life, she simply responded: "I am. I am. I am very

happy with my life. I don't know that I would do anything different; I would have all the children that I have or decided to take the career path that I did."

Eva shared with me only one low point in her life, which was when she lost her sister. Eva still struggles to fill the emotional hole, even though it has been a few years now. The situation with her son Sebastian took its toll as well, but Eva is "incredibly, incredibly thankful, and so happy to see him every day." She does not ask, "Why me?" She is grateful to have her son around, even though he is different. I had to admire her emotional stamina.

Growing into Career Path

Eva has shared with me that her calling is to be of service to others. She seems to follow her grandmother's and mother's paths. I recollect Eva revealing that her grandmother helped to deliver babies and gave injections to the plantation workers. I remember also that her mother gave a family cemetery lot to another family whose little girl died; they could not afford to buy one. It just seemed natural that Eva would continue that path.

When she found out that the high school she was attending offered Certified Nursing Assistant training, she decided to sign up, even though the sign-up deadline had passed. Eva said:

The counselor just didn't think I should apply for CNA, and so I said, "Well, that's what I want to do," and he says, "Well, you're too late. Maybe, take another class." And I said, "I don't want another class."

Because of the delay, Eva had to talk to the "very strict" teacher, who was not supportive because the classes were in progress and Eva would be behind. Eva did not give up; she really wanted to become a CNA.

“I will catch up! I will do whatever I need to do. I’ve already talked to a couple of my friends, and they said that you’ve only covered how to make a bed, and I know how to do that!”

The teacher didn’t think that was funny. “This is not all about making beds!”

Eva burst into laughter. I imagined the shock on the “strict teacher’s” face when she heard that this tiny Hispanic student might think that being a CNA is all about changing beds. I could not help but laugh as well. The teacher allowed Eva to join the class after Eva apologized. “Okay, if you can catch up, it’s up to you.” Perhaps she did not think that Eva would follow through. Well, Eva did follow through. She completed the program and she began working in a nursing home. She was recognized as one of the best students and workers, and when the school decided to pilot a state-funded LPN program, Eva was asked to join. What an accomplishment! By the time Eva graduated from high school, she had a CNA certificate as well as a license to work as a practical nurse. She rearranged her other classes so that she would be done by two o’clock in the afternoon and an hour later was working with patients in a nearby nursing home. She was very proud. She loved to take care of her patients.

Eva continued to work at the same nursing home until one day she was asked to join the picket line. Hospitals began to prefer Registered Nurses instead of LPNs; Eva was going to lose her job! She was very upset!

Her mother offered a solution: start medical school in her native country. At that time, Eva had to evaluate whether she would be able to work as an LPN for the rest of her life. She realized she could not, not only because of her petite body frame. “Physically, it was very hard on me. Most of my patients were twice my size, and I was always needing to get somebody to

come in and help me lift the patient to get them into bed.” But that was not all. She wanted to do more, a lot more. Eva wanted to become a doctor.

By this time, Eva and her brother had lived with her grandparents in the United States for about eleven years. Her mother remained in their native country building her business while raising another brother and a sister. Eva became fluent in the English language and created many friendships in New York. So when Eva’s mother proposed for her to study medicine back home instead of seeking student loans in the United States, Eva was hesitant. Losing friends was one thing, but her inability to speak fluent Spanish at the level of college students was another.

Mom had decided. Before Eva knew, the boxes were packed and Eva was on her way back home. Eva started medical school in her native country. Her commitment and focus helped her through language struggles and academic requirements. It took her a couple of years, but she finally felt like she belonged. “And all of a sudden I felt like I fit in. I was able to keep up, and, and just continue to work hard, and, the challenges were constant.”

Eva truly enjoyed her clinical experience. She felt that even as a student, she could make a difference. At one point, she was assigned to a clinical site that was known for not providing a good learning experience for medical students. Eva was devastated, but the customs were not to change. No one before was able to change this clinical site; clinical site assignments were final.

During this time, Diego came to her rescue. Eva and Diego knew of each other and occasionally worked together on assigned projects. As it turned out, he knew of someone who was willing to exchange the clinical site for family reasons. So, even though almost impossible, Eva was able to obtain her professor’s permission to exchange the clinical site. She joined Diego at his clinical site, which turned out to be a great learning experience for Eva.

Six years of studies paid off, and Eva graduated with her doctoral degree in October. Within the next month or so, she got married to Diego and moved back to the United States. Throughout the years, they each kept their certifications current in their home country.

In the United States, Eva considered going through certifications to be able to practice as a physician. Although the process was very difficult and required a 100% time commitment, Eva began with an almost impossible task—to find a program that would accept her as a foreign graduate. During this time her first son was born, which changed her focus entirely. Later on, an opportunity to join a research team at a primary children's hospital started Eva on a different path, the path of pediatric and genetic research. A little later, she went straight to full research in genetics and started cardiovascular training in genetics; she finally went into neurological disorders and genetics, which has been her focus for about the past ten years. She knew that was her place: Research dedicated to children's diseases became her focus and her career. "I believe that we all have a career, and we all have to grow into that career."

Her intellectual skills allow her to assist families that are devastated by horrible childhood disease, and she feels fortunate to work with these families to provide all assistance and care to them and their children. She was and is able to do this by holding her ground, by becoming unique in what she does, and by becoming an expert. Eva said:

You can do that only if you are strong, because it is very difficult to break the ground, to start a whole new program and have people begin to trust you. Not only patients but professionals also. You have to be strong to build your career with the right tools.

I have no doubt that Eva is fully committed to her young patients and their families. Not only was she late to our first narrative interview because of complications with one of her young patients, but she was not able to participate at all in one of our phone interviews because of a

new diagnosis and the family's difficulties in accepting the news. Eva's empathy offers support and care and her expertise offers hope, all of which leaves a toll on her that she never showed and has spoken of only once. At one point, Eva said that because she almost lost her son Sebastian, she is more in tune with the families of her patients. She knows how it is to almost lose a child; she understands how it may feel knowing that the child will physically never be what they imagined. Her transparency and authenticity guides her to reach out to her patients and their families. Although she never showed fatigue or discouragement, she said that her own experience left "the wound open," the wound that still hurts, but which helps her to be closer to those to whom she gives care.

Eva's commitment to science, her patients, and her professional development did not escape notice by the university administration. She was able to reach one of her goals, that of becoming a tenured professor.

My goal has always been to get my appointment, to have a tenure track, and that's what I really wanted to do. It takes a lot of work to do that; it takes, I guess, a lot of commitment from someone who is kind of following that direction. I guess I have been able to show that I am doing what I'm doing because I love the work that I do and that we make a difference, and so I was offered the faculty position. And that's where I am right now.

Eva believes that she is in her position because she was able to grow into her path by using the right tools, although very slowly, by gaining the trust of all around her. She also shared that even though she is very goal oriented, she was "somewhat happily surprised to see where my career has taken me, because I really never expected to be this involved in what I do."

What does the appointment mean for Eva?

It definitely is a big, it's a big reward for all the time and commitment and dedication that I have put out, and not just by myself. I don't think I could do, I can get to anywhere where I would be right now if it wasn't for my husband's support and the family. The kids have been wonderful, and they get excited for every triumph that my husband has or I have in our careers. So it was a big reward, is how I felt. Because now it just opens up other doors that need to come open in order for you to grow more. And it only happens once you're in that track. So it was a very big deal.

Eva shared this information with me on the phone while driving from one of her son's sports events. We lost our phone connection about five times as she was driving through some mountainous areas. Eva always called me back. I saw it as one of the examples of how she gained the trust of those around her. Only when I said that I had collected all the information, our conversation was over.

Eva is proud, "positively proud" of her accomplishments. Following her roots, she considers herself to be a very successful foreign-born woman.

I still, I am a foreign woman. And at work, I'm another foreigner who's been very successful, and people look up to that. For the most part, it's well received, and especially if you do a good job, people will respect that.

Working hard paid off for Eva, even though she believes that she had to work harder than if she were born in the United States to reach her goals.

Yes, I really do [believe I had to work harder than native born]. I see it, I feel it. And of course I went through training, and I can appreciate that. We were always challenged a little more, and that was just how it was. And not only, not only for women, but definitely for men also, who were foreigners.

Eva's work energizes her even though it requires a full-time commitment. She is used to working long hours; she has seen her grandmother and mother work long hours as well. She enjoys the daily challenges of her work, as no two days are the same. She mentioned that she gets up at around six o'clock and together with her mom, who is living with her now, they prepare a hardy breakfast: eggs, bacon, toast. There is no room for refusal of this daily fuel. "We fixed it, you eat it," Eva said. After breakfast, she goes to work and joins her team of 12 professionals.

Eva shared with me how crucial it is to have the right team, people who fit and are not afraid to work together. She believes that her team members are supportive of each other, even though often they tend to be "on edge." One of the most important characteristics of a team leader is to learn how to maneuver through all the stress without being accused of not being collegial. Eva also shared that navigating through the politics of her position is very difficult, but she believes that she has found her spot, her home. "It takes determination, hard work and knowing what you want. You have to know what your love is. I really think I am where I need to be right now," Eva closed her thought.

Eva believes it is her calling to assist her young patients and their families as they go through very difficult times dealing with different neurological genetic conditions. At this time, as an assistant professor, Eva serves as director and as co-director, leading two different research teams. She manages multimillion-dollar research seeking treatment for genetic diseases. She meets with patients and their families and provides guidance to them through difficult times once diagnosis is reached.

I consider Eva to be successful, not just for being a foreign-born woman in her position; I believe that her position would mean success also for a native-born woman. Eva not only leads a

multimillion-dollar research program, she co-leads another research program and leads a team of experts, not only at her institution, but she also collaborates internationally. She is aware, though, that similar research would not be possible in her native country, although her achievements would be recognized. “In [my country], I would be perceived as a very successful person, and as a woman, I would be perceived as a very smart woman. And I would have, there’s a lot of respect that comes with that,” Eva said. However, she would not be able to do research due to lack of finances; she would be able to work as a physician.

I had to ask what her mom thinks of the way Eva’s personal and professional lives turned out. Eva said simply, “She is one proud mama.” She continued that she understands that feeling now, as a mother herself. “Children are our legacy.”

Daring Spirit: Me

As Eva said, your roots are who you are. I am also a foreign-born woman serving as an administrator in a higher education institution. I will share my story now to explain the lens through which I see, where I am coming from, and how my perceptions of the world events were shaped.

I was raised in a small country in the middle of Europe in a three-generational household: my grandparents, my parents, my brother, and me. Not only that, for about the first six years of my life, we had my uncle, his wife, and their two boys—my cousins—living with us.

I had a very happy childhood. My grandparents took care of my brother and me while our parents worked. We would work in the vegetable garden together, harvest together . . . there were many family events like that. My mother’s celebration of new spring vegetables from our garden made us excited as well and we learned to love to eat vegetables. I was raised to respect elders, all people, as well as animals that serve as food to us.

Education was taken very seriously but never forced. My parents expected excellence but never exerted pressure. Learning was as natural as food. As an excellent student throughout all of my schooling, I was active in sports, literature competitions, and student government.

My first career choice was to become a teacher; however, at that time, all teachers were required to join a leading political party, which I refused to do. I became a nurse instead. I married my high-school sweetheart and my only daughter was born a year later. That is when my world drastically changed.

My daughter was born with a medical condition that was untreatable in my country at that time, and when I was advised by doctors to have another child because she was going to die before reaching her adolescence, I revolted. I started planning to seek treatment for her in the western part of Europe. The government of my native country was not open to my plans. The political climate was such that citizens were not allowed to travel to Western Europe unless they were members of the leading political party. This was because members of the leading political party were not eligible for refugee status and political asylum in the Western countries.

Four years of planning paid off and my daughter was able to have a life-saving surgery in Austria at the age of four and a half. Once she recovered, there was no way for us to go back: We had left illegally, and I would have faced prison. My daughter would be taken from me and put up for adoption. We could not stay in Austria, as our refugee status was temporary, so we had to plan forward.

After almost two years, we arrived in the United States and started the process of acculturation. We were able to bring only a very few personal documents with us, so none of my academic credentials made it. My nursing degree did not have any value without credentials, and I was not able to take the nursing test due to the language barrier. It took me a little over a

decade to gather enough courage and sufficient language skills to go back to school. At that time, my abusive spouse was gone and I was able to pursue my own dreams. Slowly but surely I have progressed toward a doctoral degree in education, which was my initial goal.

After my marriage fell apart, I raised my daughter without any additional financial support. All my immediate and extended family lived in my native country. I could not count on financial support from them nor from my ex-husband: My parents did not have extra money and my ex-husband was not interested in supporting two families. Most of that time, I worked long hours as a home health aide, often at two or three different companies, to earn enough to support my daughter and me. Little by little, I was able to progress to higher paying jobs as I earned higher degrees, until I ended up serving as an administrator in a higher education institution. My parents, although unable to help me financially, provided emotional and moral support. I remember that for a number of years, I wrote a weekly letter to my parents and mailed it to them every Friday. I could not afford phone calls, but I could afford a few cents for international postage. They did not write back as often, but for me it meant more to write to them.

The entire departure was very difficult for my close family. During the years of planning, I could not mention that there might be a chance that we might not return because of possible legal persecution to my family. I was able to share that we were planning to seek treatment for my daughter, though. Once the day came that we were able to pack for a weeklong skiing trip, it was only by bureaucratic error that we were not caught and imprisoned. So the morning of our departure, I said good-bye to my parents and my brother as if we were going to be gone for a week. My heart was hurting and I was scared out of my mind that I would never see them again, because of horror stories I had heard of people who tried the same thing that I

was attempting to do now. Imprisonment would have been the least of my problems; I had heard stories of kidnappings and murders of people who tried to leave the country or who, once left, did not plan to come back. I could not tell my parents and brother that, if successful at crossing the borders, we might not come back. At that time, I did not know if I would ever see my parents and my brother again.

It took only 24 hours for the state police to figure out that we had left the country, but by that time, we were checked into a hotel in the mountains close to a ski area. After a few days of planning, we located a police station and requested political asylum, which was granted to us, and after a few weeks in the refugee camp, we were moved to another location, awaiting visas to the United States. It took almost twenty months before we boarded an airplane with the destination where we were going to start a new life. During those 20 months my daughter had undergone a heart surgery and recovered successfully. Every day, I was grateful for my daughter's chance to live, and I was also scared that someone would take her away from me. Whenever I would walk with her down the streets of the little mountainous town where we lived at that time, and a car passed by, I would make sure to hold her hand very tightly and look for ways to run, in case someone tried to kidnap her. I have heard many stories where parents returned back to the country to follow their kidnapped child, just to face imprisonment or even worse.

We arrived late at night at a small rural town in the western part of the United States, a town or state that I had never heard about before I chose it as one of about ten different locations. I did not want to go to a large city, and this little town was the only location that listed a college.

Adjusting to a new culture and life was as challenging as learning a new language. I took an English class at the local college (the one that had made me choose that town), but the

experience was disappointing, because as only a second-language student, I received almost no attention from my instructor. He admitted it and offered me another semester for free, but I declined. I continued on my own. As an avid reader all of my life, I felt very frustrated because I could not read. I was not able to bring any books in my native tongue, and I could not read books in the English language. My only reading resources were free newspaper and advertising material that arrived at our apartment, equipped with boxes covered with blankets to facilitate some shelving.

Cooking was a challenge as well. My first encounter with any food was the day after our arrival. The organization that took care of refugees arriving to the United States left some groceries in the refrigerator and cupboards. I remember the heavy smell of chemicals irritating my nose when smelling them. I thought in a panic, “I cannot eat this! I cannot live here! I have to go back home!”

I got used to the processed foods and stayed. I attempted to re-create meals the way I used to cook them at home, but soon I realized that nothing tasted the same. Bread tasted different, because flour tasted different. Re-creating meaty dishes became a challenge as well, because meat tasted different. Even potatoes did not taste the same. After a few unsuccessful attempts, I stopped making meals I knew and learned to cook local dishes.

I did not find it difficult to adjust to the new culture. I knew I did not have a choice. I could not go back home, so I had to make it work. My first job as a nursing assistant at the local hospital was also my first real lesson in the English language. I depended on people around me and their patience with my very limited language skills from just six months living in the United States. After only a few months, I was the only nursing aide working in the intensive care unit.

At that time my daughter started attending the first grade of elementary school and ended up learning the language faster and better than I did.

My biggest challenge emerged when I was accepted to the radiography program. At that time, I had lived in the United States for about fourteen years, my marriage already fell apart, and I needed to look into the future. I did not want to continue to study nursing; I wanted challenge. Radiography offered that to me. I struggled through the physics. Although I did not have any problems with physics in my own language, the challenge came in learning it in English. I felt I worked the hardest of the students in my entire class; I often questioned whether I would make it. I slept only about two to three hours a night for about half of the program, but I made it. I made it as one of the best students in the entire program, and I decided to continue with my education. As I was progressing with my education, I progressed with my career. In all of the positions, I was able to rise to the top and be among the top performers. I found a great satisfaction in all of the jobs I have done as I moved from health-care worker to educator to the leadership positions in education. I always searched for challenge, and nothing was difficult enough.

At one point, I was asked by my supervisor, “What is your kryptonite?” I did not understand the question at first; once I understood what that was, I responded: “I measure all difficulties in my life by my one particular previous experience.” My most difficult life experience was to leave my home, my parents, my brother, and my life without knowing whether my daughter or I would survive, or at least not end up forced back to our country and in prison. Nothing that I have experienced after that came close in difficulty to this experience, so I do not know what makes me weak. Recently, I find great satisfaction in guiding an educational team working with adult learners and I feel fortunate to be able to have that opportunity.

As a foreign-born woman, I could have chosen the path of many other foreign-born women; instead I have chosen the path of few. I was able to recognize and welcome opportunities coming my way and take advantage of them in order to serve others. That has always brought a sense of fulfillment to me.

Eva and Me

When I met Eva for the first time, I felt a strong sense of natural self-confidence in her. As I rode an elevator to the first floor to meet her, I kept wondering how I would recognize her amid all the guests in the reception area. Eva solved that for me: She called out to me first. My e-mails contain a small portrait caricature of me, but I was surprised that Eva was able to recognize me by that image. Her wardrobe was impeccable down to her purse, and even the pager she carried around her neck seemed to fit perfectly. The evening was very cold and although we both prepared a hot green tea at the reception area, we did not drink our tea until the very end of the interview.

As we spoke, we both felt comfortable eating and talking despite the “Don’t talk while you eat” social rule. I found her warm, loving, caring, dependable, determined, and focused. Naturally, as if she had known me for a long time, she gave me a hug before she left to meet her son, who was waiting for her until almost ten o’clock when we finally finished our first interview. Even though we had grown up in very different parts of the world, I found it surprising how our life stories carried similar elements, some of them more tangible than others.

There are only a few months of difference between Eva’s and my ages. At one point, both of us almost lost our children. Eva’s son Sebastian almost died from an unusual stroke, and my daughter would have died without her experimental heart surgery. I felt very close to Eva and I understood very well how it feels to be sitting next to your child in a hospital bed waiting

for a miracle to happen. When Eva shared this part of her story, I almost felt like I was sitting next to her in that hospital room. It was easy for me to understand her describing when she and Diego were making decisions about Sebastian's surgery; my daughter was given a 25% chance to recover from her surgery. I had asked Eva to review my writings to verify data. In one of our phone conversations later in the process, Eva expressed that I was able to describe her life and experiences very closely, and that at one point when she read about her son's hospitalization, she became "quite emotional" to the point that she had to stop reading.

Another aspect that I feel we share is that of a soul mate. I left my native country and arrived in the United States with my first husband. While married to him, I was not able to resume my education; I was a typical immigrant wife staying home or making very little money as a nurse's aide while he was pursuing his career and higher paying jobs. He was not supportive of me going back to school; I was supposed to "work for him." It was not until our marriage dissolved that I was able to start pursuing my educational goals. At that time, I knew I could not count on any support from him and I was certain that I could not survive on the salary I was making, even working three different jobs.

While pursuing my associate degree, I met my current husband through a mutual friend. From the very beginning of our relationship he was fully supportive of my academic goals. Even Eva complimented him during our first meeting. She said, "[He must be supportive] just the fact that you're here, doing this . . . and your husband's home . . . that means that he really believes in what you are doing and that he cares for what you do and what it means to you." I was very inclined to agree with Eva that partners can either "pull you up or push you down." It seems to me that I have experienced both.

What surprised me perhaps the most was our familial backgrounds. We both grew up in multigenerational households. Actually, to this day, Eva has her mother and her in-laws living with her, her husband, and her children. I grew up with my grandparents living with my parents and my brother; perhaps I should say that we all lived with my grandparents.

My grandparents and parents were very strong influences in my life. I grew up to be very close to my grandparents, not just because of our living arrangements, but also because of their loving and supportive presence. I was the only girl among my brother and two male cousins, and my grandpa always had a special spot in his heart for me. I shared with Eva one of my most precious memories of my grandfather, as one night I had a dream about him. At that time, he had been dead for almost two decades and I never had a dream about him before or since. In my dream, I saw his sad face with tears rolling down his sun-tanned cheeks. When I asked him why he was crying, he said that he was sad: "I miss Grandma." When I mentioned my dream to my husband, he purchased airline tickets and we went back home to spend the summer with my grandma. Seven months later, she passed away.

Although my grandparents received only fifth-grade educations and my parents received eighth-grade educations, they strongly believed that education is very important. It was expected that my brother and I would continue with our education beyond high school. As far back as I remember, I enjoyed school and learning, and throughout my high school and college years, homework assignments were the first thing I did when I came home from school. Extracurricular activities and even helping at home were always secondary to schoolwork. Interestingly, I never had to be forced or reminded to study. The expectation was clear, and I followed.

In addition to my grandparents and parents, my teachers and professors in nursing school were those who shaped my academic pursuits. My literature teacher in middle and high school always encouraged me to do my best. She would lead me to many linguistic competitions where I would often place among the top two. “I knew you would,” she said. She did not say that I *could*, she said I *would*, and that meant a lot to me. My teacher believed in me, often more than I believed in myself.

With this background of being a good student in my original country, I found my first two years back in college in the United States very frustrating. Even though at that time I had lived in the United States for over a decade, my language skills were more conversational. I possessed the ability to understand most of the general written texts, but I struggled with physics and chemistry in English. Being the top student back at home, I found it very frustrating that I had to study longer than any of my classmates. What my classmates mastered in two to three hours took me six to seven hours. The language barrier seemed too enormous to overcome. By this time I was in my mid-thirties with an already failed marriage, so another failure was not an option. I doubted my abilities. As a result, I slept very little that first year, but I made it. The second year got easier and I started to like learning again. I started feeling comfortable as a student, which motivated me to continue with my studies. I gained confidence and started enjoying association with scholars. Learning became a way of life for me. Not only had I started to enjoy learning, I returned to my original goal—to become a teacher and administrator. For the last seven years, I have been fortunate to work with adult learners and lead a group of educators at a higher education institution.

Throughout our discussions, I have not once doubted that Eva feels content with her professional attainments and life in general. She works long hours with two teams of researchers

and provides support to her family. Sharing our stories, we both agreed that we have rarely, if ever, considered the question: family or career. What I do is a part of me, my life, and my family, and as such, I seldom try to make a hard line between my work and my personal life. Eva shared similar thoughts. She said that her success is celebrated by her entire family, which helps her to provide better for her family. Being successful makes her a better mother and wife.

Through all our success, we both feel that we “are what our roots are” and we will always remain foreigners. We both celebrate American holidays but also our “own” holidays. My house is decorated with artifacts that I brought with me, and my home library is filled with books in two languages often mixed on the shelves. As foreign-born women, we face challenges every day, and often the challenges “outweigh advantages,” as Eva said. There is a constant pressure to improve ourselves, to be always ahead of others. People applaud our success, but if we are not careful and make a wrong move, everything could come tumbling down faster than it would for a U.S.-born man or woman. Eva felt that society is much harder on foreign-born women, and I had to agree.

We both agreed also that the advantages are perhaps fewer, but very powerful. As women who lived in different cultures, we can provide different perspectives and experiences; it is almost like we bring ideas and intellectual capacity for two people. This ability is very helpful when mentoring junior faculty members. In addition, we are more prone to help other foreign-born colleagues, students, or just people, which is very important in today’s global environment.

Perhaps the most significant difference between Eva and me is the way we left our countries of birth. Eva left as a child, following her grandparents, who were trying to escape the unfavorable political situation that was affecting their family negatively. Once her grandparents

were settled in the United States, Eva had a safe life, although her family was split among two continents.

I left at the age of 26 years old with my four-and-a-half-year-old daughter, escaping country politics that would have eventually caused her death. I did not feel safe for the first 20 months while living in Austria, due to the proximity of both countries. Only once we had arrived in the United States was I able to shake off the habit of constantly looking over my shoulder. The relaxed atmosphere of a little northwest town helped me to start concentrating on getting used to a new lifestyle, culture, and language. When I look back now at how I chose our first hometown, I feel that my decision was somewhat naïve and childish. A list of potential locations for settlement included large metropolitan cities with a significant population of settlers from my original country. Instead, I chose a small town in northwestern America because the information provided to me had listed a local college. None of the metropolitan centers listed educational institutions; I just assumed that there was no higher institution for me to attend.

With my doctoral degree and dissertation nearing completion, I no longer feel that I am a typical immigrant wife. The same can be said about Eva. At this time both of us provide leadership to our colleagues and mentorship to our students. I found it interesting and encouraging that although some of our life experiences have been different, many of them were similar, which makes me think that although the results of this study cannot be generalized, they can be used toward gaining a deeper understanding of the process of acculturation of an immigrant woman and the very specific needs she may have or look for in order to reach her full aspirations. And even though Eva and I grew up in different parts of the world and created our own new life paths, there are some similar key points that have helped both of us to become successful. We both are highly self-motivated and self-determined women, able to seek

opportunities and take advantage of them, regardless of how they present themselves to us. We both enjoyed a strong family support and guidance that helped us to build a strong sense of self-esteem and belief that we are capable of creating our own life paths. Education was highly valued in Eva's and my families, which impacted us not only in the pursuit of terminal doctoral degrees but in our identity as lifelong learners, where a need to acquire new skills and knowledge is a part of our daily agenda. Living in two different cultures meant challenges and perhaps losses for both of us, but brought up advantages and gains that we would probably never have experienced should we have not chosen the paths we did.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

This qualitative narrative study attempted to answer these questions:

1. What are the challenges and advantages of being a foreign-born woman administrator in higher education in the United States?
2. What experiences and events took place in your life that contributed to your decision to follow a career path to higher education?
3. In what ways are you similar in and what ways are you different from other foreign-born women you know?

Discussion

Eva's narrative revealed rich, in-depth experiences of a foreign-born woman in the process of relocating to the United States where her career culminated thus far by providing leadership and support to scholars, students, patients, and their family members at one of the well-known medical schools in the United States with research collaborating internationally. Eva's relocation was not exactly streamlined; she actually relocated to the United States twice: She came to the United States first as a young child, then after returning to her original country to study at medical school, she returned back to the United States as a young professional, starting her career and own family at the same time.

What were the experiences and what did they mean for Eva? How did they affect Eva's life? What were the struggles and triumphs that Eva faced during her resettlement? What and who helped her to get through challenging times? What does that all mean to Eva and why is her story different than the story of millions of immigrant women? This chapter addresses these and a few related questions based on analysis of Eva's narrative.

Emerging themes. Eva's recounting of her life experiences demonstrates her ability to thrive in any situation that is presented to her as well as her aptitude to make any opportunity work for her. Her "uncommon resiliency" (Hackett, 1996, p. xii) and her personal characteristics, combined with her background, have molded her into a complex yet transparent professional woman serving in a capacity that is still rare, not only for the majority of women relocating to the United States but also for those born in the United States. This study joins a few researchers' voices that have started to emerge within the last decade trying to put a face to the immigration process and more so, attempting to unveil and emphasize wellness and success. Vargas (2002) presented immigrants as "often highly educated and motivated individuals" (p. 146). She posited that immigrant women "enrich" (p. 147) higher education institutions in the United States, providing balance to the predominantly White male perspective by adding two more dimensions: female and international perspectives. Their foreignness can be used to their advantage and more so, the researcher pleaded for immigrants not to immerse themselves in the dominant culture so much that they lose the sense of who they were before (Gahungu, 2011).

Eva's voice in this study validates previous research dedicated to immigrant women and foreign-born women. Her resiliency helped her to create a new life for herself and her family. With her goal in mind, she accepted an offer to join an LPN program while in high school. She recognized the significance of her mother's decision for her to study in medical school in her original country and complied. Later when an opportunity for research presented itself, Eva adapted and continued to develop not only herself but also her research teams, and she became a pillar in international collaborative efforts to seek treatment for a debilitating childhood condition.

Berger (2004) recognized three types of sources for resiliency: social, familial, and personal. Eva mentioned a few role models who affected her throughout her life. Her grandmother, who lived to be almost 102 years old, was Eva's first inspiration to become a doctor. Eva's mother was her role model as well, as she started her own business and became very successful as a young divorced woman. There were a few professors in her medical school whom Eva "wanted to be like [them] when she grows up," as well as mentors in her initial career in research who significantly influenced Eva.

Family can offer support in multiple ways. First and foremost, Eva's grandparents believed in education. Eva's grandfather continued to teach her and two cousins the Spanish language when she moved to live with her grandparents in the United States. Later, her mother supported Eva while she was in medical school. Perhaps the most significant impact that Eva's family imparted in her was her self-esteem. In the absence of the father, Eva's grandfather was one of her biggest supporters, making her feel like she was important and that she mattered from the time she was a little girl. Growing up in an environment like that, Eva ended up being confident, courageous, and able to focus on the task at hand. She did not mind facing a "strict" teacher while in junior high when she decided to pursue her CNA goal. She was able to exchange her clinical site from the hospital that turned out to be a bad experience for her, something that had not been done very often.

Another significant family support that contributed to Eva's resiliency is respect for authority, in Eva's case, her mother. Eva asked for her mother's permission whenever important decisions were to be made. Eva received her mother's permission to date her first boyfriend and later her current husband. She also was granted permission to live with three other classmates in

order not to waste precious time while traveling daily to and from medical school. At that time, she was in her fourth year of medical school.

Motherhood can be a source of considerable stress for immigrant women, but it can also be a source of strength. Eva stated that she wants to provide more opportunities for her five children, and that is a very strong motivator to be successful in her career. The long hours she puts into her work may take her away from some extracurricular activities of her children, but she and the entire family learned to compensate; they all use technology to stay connected. All achievements are celebrated by the entire family. In Eva's case, career is the way to support the family; as such, it is a part of her family. She was able to find a balance between her career and family as one would not be without the other.

Eva identified some personal traits and her ability to cope with changes as they related to her resiliency. She reported being ambitious; her ambitions are more "internal ambitions" that drive her to "better herself in order to serve better to others." Eva elaborated that her ambitions come from her heart, not from a need for monetary compensation. She feels responsibility or stewardship for people who entrust themselves to her, whether these are colleagues, students, or parents of her young patients, and she takes this responsibility "very seriously." I experienced this during our multiple narrative interviews: Although it took almost three months before we could start the process due to her son being very ill, Eva kept her promise, and once able to proceed, she contacted me herself. She demonstrated a full commitment to people around her by stating "if we are going to work together . . . I give myself out to that," and although it takes her a long time to give up, she does know her limits and she feels comfortable to "put her foot down" if needed. Further, Eva reported being enthusiastic and optimistic and not concentrating on

negatives. She mentioned that she “never felt an inch of discrimination,” which could be a part of her predominantly positive outlook.

In my case, the social sources of my resiliency were my grandparents, my parents, mainly my high school teacher, and some of my professors. The values I was expected to follow were to have respect for other people and myself, to always strive for self-sufficiency, to be careful what I say, and most of all to keep my word to others as well as to myself. Self-respect included a rainbow of aphorisms like give before you take, believe in the goodness of people, all people are equal and to be treated with the respect they deserve, believe in your abilities, and a few others.

I also had enough defiance in me. My first husband told me during one of the violent episodes that I would never make it in the United States on my own. I have never doubted that I would, although there were times when I struggled. At that time, it was only my teenage daughter and me, and I was working three jobs for us to survive. I felt like I did not have a choice, although my parents told me that if I came back home, they would help me. I was also certain that if I would go back, I would most likely be able to work at the same hospital where I started after I graduated from a nursing school.

Despite the loving offer and brighter outlook, I felt that I could not go back because of my daughter. I left my original country because of my daughter and I felt that I could not go back because of her. The only language my daughter spoke at school was English; the only school system she knew was the American education system (she was four-and-a-half when we left our country). She was 13 years old when our lives reached the crossroads. Her current life became the only life she remembered and I could not take it away from her. I had to figure out another way to provide for her. It was then that I registered for my first class at the local university. She was very upset with me at that time. I remember walking from the registration

office when she told me that she would run away. “I will catch you,” I responded almost pragmatically.

My daughter, despite struggles, has been my biggest motivation while getting adjusted to life in the United States. With me being a first generation of immigrants and my daughter perhaps never having children of her own, per doctor’s recommendation due to a heart condition, I knew it was only her and me always. Even though I have met my current husband (and he is what some people would consider my soul mate), and my daughter got married to a great young man, if I take into consideration Eva’s saying that we are what our roots are, my true story would include only my daughter and me.

Berger (2004) offered a second characteristic of successful immigrant (foreign-born) women: duality. In regards to their ability to cope with duality, Berger (2004) wrote:

Immigration is inevitably a situation of duality, any way one phrases it. One can make it either an experience of being torn between two parts of one’s life or an experience of having a bargain of “two for one.” I decided to celebrate my life as a story of multiplication rather than division. (p. 56)

A few years back, Danquah (2000) referred to duality as “to speak, to think, to eat, and to dream in more than one language” (p. 19). Eva’s reporting, as well as my experiences, paralleled previous studies, in that creating a life and home in a new country has been a significant challenge. Although Eva came first as a young child, which allowed her to learn the language at an early age, upon her return after earning her doctoral degree, she referred to herself as a Latina *and* an American woman and she could not “separate those two.” She is “very proud” of her heritage and she wants her children “to understand their background.” Once again, it was her

grandfather who wanted Eva as well as the rest of the family “to stick to traditions” from the very beginning of her living with them in New York.

Eva’s family celebrates all North American holidays, such as the Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Martin Luther King Day, as well as some special holidays from her homeland. Eva reported that during any holiday celebration, there is “a lot of dancing, constant teasing” but most of all, there is “celebrating together.” The entire family shares a special meal on Christmas at midnight. As for everyday food, Eva’s mother and mother-in-law, who live with her now, cook only traditional food. Her aunt in New York cooks traditional Caribbean food because of her husband. Eva cooks a little bit of both, plus American food.

Eva’s house is decorated with American artifacts and the artifacts she brought from her native country. She raises her children to be respectful, which is very important in her original country. She wears her wedding ring the way it is worn in her country of birth. She speaks fluently in English and Spanish. She said, “I’m another foreigner who’s been very successful, and people look up to that. For the most part, it’s well received, and especially if you do a good job, people will respect that.” However, when I asked where she wants to be buried when she dies, she said without thinking, “Here.”

With the exception of a couple years in medical school when Eva struggled with Spanish, Eva did not report a language issue. My situation was different. I arrived in the United States without language skills and had to learn the English language while adjusting to a new culture and a new life. I still have an accent, unlike my daughter. I still make errors in my speech, and although I am working on getting rid of errors, I do not want to lose my accent. I started working about six months after arriving in the United States, when my English language skills were very limited. As a nurse’s aide, I depended on the tolerance of my patients. Years later I

struggled in school as a student, and even later as an instructor with an accent. I learned to work with it, though. I would let my students know that I have an accent and if they do not understand something to let me know. I would use some examples of vowels and consonants that do not appear in English and had the students try to pronounce them. I would share some stories from my personal life; I found that mostly they were accepted. Periodically, some of my students would let me know if they came across something or someone that had some ties to my country.

I cook American and international food, but I prefer Celsius to Fahrenheit and liters over fluid ounces. I speak with my daughter in English and with my parents in my native language. I combine my original values with my new life and the result is rather satisfying to me. My struggle to leave my old country and build a new life in the United States gave me high tolerance for complicated issues and a keen sense of problem-solving skills. I feel that my tolerance bar was set rather high when I had to face leaving my country, accompanied with the experimental surgery for my daughter in a country where we did not speak the language, waiting for an American visa, and trying to get used to a new life. Processing at this level, no problem is too big for me.

Coping with duality is often shaped by social forces (Berger, 2004). Eva did not specifically mention it but she noted that she will always be a Latina woman, that she had to work harder than any of her colleagues, and that her success can quickly “tumble down” by her smallest mistake. I had to learn rather quickly not to voice negative opinions regarding society, politics, or people, because the answer often came: “If you do not like it, go back where you came from.” According to Berger (2004), this experience is quite common among all immigrants, but mostly among women, educated or not, as a part of the general social oppression of women.

Another factor to consider when discussing coping with duality is the immigrant's own attitude toward the original country. Eva reported that she loves her homeland, she is proud of her cultural heritage, and she wants her children to stay connected to it, but she has no plans to visit until her children get older. During their last visit, one of her sons became physically ill seeing very poor neighborhoods on their way to an exclusive resort.

I share a similar feeling toward my own country. The longer I am gone, the stronger is my sense of where I came from and who I was before I came to the United States. It may not make a lot of sense, but I am now more patriotic to my original country than I ever was before, and as hard it is to understand, that does not diminish my sense of pride in who I am now.

My last visit to my native country brought perhaps the deepest repulsion so far as to what happened to people during the oppressive regime decades ago. I saw people with bent souls and gray faces. It hurts me that my parents and my brother still live there, but I was glad that my daughter lives in a different world, with options.

A significant portion of the reviewed literature revealed that immigration is characterized by many losses (Danquah, 2000; Hackett, 1996). However, the gains are substantial and often outweigh the losses. Even though the life may be interrupted by leaving the old country and trying to find one's own spot in a new country, it gives the illusion of living two lives in one. I often refer to my experience in my old country as "in my first life." In Eva's case, living "two lives" was not as pronounced because she arrived in the United States as a little girl, and even though she went back to her native country to study medicine, she knew that was only a temporary arrangement and that she would be back in the United States.

Eva's narrative offered a clear picture of social, professional, and financial gain for herself and her family. Often she reminds her children, "If I've gotten this far, you can go much

further, because you're smarter than I am! You have more opportunities than what I had growing up." She also reported that even though she would be well respected in her own country should she return, she would not be able to do the research, as research is not well funded there. Eva is "very proud, but positively proud. It pays off to work hard, it really does." She had not expected to go this far in her career, but she "grew into it." She is confident, tolerant, assertive yet kind, transparent, and always endless in her servitude to others. Safety of her entire family is a very important aspect of her life in the United States, something with which I resonate very well. I never felt safe in Austria, and nights full of nightmares continued for quite some time after arriving in the United States, until I finally started feeling safer. As my daughter is embarking on her graduate degree and I am in the process of completing my doctoral degree, I am not sure if our lives would have progressed in similar fashions in our homeland. Having my last visit fresh in my mind and remembering broken spirits, I have to wonder how our life would be.

Summary

Eva and I are different from U.S.-born women in the way we communicate. We are aware of our differences or diversity, and self-awareness is one of the prerequisites of a good leader and administrator in higher education. Eva and I make sure that people understand what we are trying to say because we are aware that we are different. We phrase and paraphrase when we communicate, whether it is receptive or expressive communication. Paradoxically, because we are different, we are better listeners as well. We have learned to listen attentively, verify to make sure understand correctly, and ask questions when not clear. As leaders, we cannot afford to assume we understand; we have to make sure we understand.

Because of our diversity as leaders in higher education, we are able to consider multiple views; we have that ability due to our past and present life, our dual life. This dual life helps us, as leaders, to better relate to and understand faculty and students from diverse backgrounds. This particular skill is becoming more important in the increasingly global environment. Contextually, our critical thinking has a much wider base due to the juxtaposition of two sets of skills, knowledge, and dispositions: the set we inherited in our original environments and the set we acquired in the US.

Eva and I were each raised in a culture that emphasized collectivism, unlike the individualistic culture in the United States. In leadership, collaboration is of utmost importance. It comes more naturally to Eva and me due to our upbringings. These characteristics are true for a transformational leader through empowerment of followers and nurturing them to change. Research points to the fact that females tend to lean more toward a transformational style of leadership than men. “They attempt to raise the consciousness in individuals and to get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others” (Northouse, 2010, p. 185). This resembles motherhood, because mothers often give up their needs to fulfill the needs of their children. Further, a spirit of cooperation between leaders and followers ensues, building trust and fostering collaboration with others. Eva’s style of leadership focuses on providing resources to all her team members to help them succeed. The same is true for me: I was often reminded by my parents and grandparents to help others to become their best.

Culture influences the leadership process as well. Eva’s ethnicity and immigration status contribute to the process of seeking a leadership role. In a Latin American culture, in-group collectivism is of importance as a leader and the people are generally loyal and devoted to their families and similar groups. Eva exhibited characteristics of a global leader, characteristics as

identified by Northouse (2010). Global leaders tend to be charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, self-protective, participative, human-oriented, and autonomous leaders (Northouse, 2010). This profile is similar to mine, coming from an Eastern European background.

In becoming a leader, Eva faced several potential challenges related to her gender, ethnicity, and immigration status. Looking at gender only, research suggests that many of the challenges women face in the leadership domain come from the incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role. Women are faced with a double standard: They must demonstrate competence and also be appropriately “feminine,” standards which men are not expected to hold (Eagly & Carli, as cited in Northouse, 2010, p. 315-316; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007).

According to a study by Revere in 1985 (as cited in Jossey-Bass, 2007), factors that led to the rise of minority women into a superintendency role were their self-confidence, industriousness, productivity, and ability to work well with people. In addition, most of the women in the study were married and felt that their husbands were a supportive factor in their career choice. Although not in a K-12 school role these results sound similar to Eva’s story. According to Ortiz (1982, as cited in Jossey-Bass, 2007), minorities frequently enter educational administration through special-project positions. Again, Eva moved into a leadership role through her role as a researcher in her institution.

Status of foreign-born and immigrant women is rather peculiar in the US society, partially because of the scarcity of research about issues specific to them, especially in-depth qualitative studies, as a result of too small a visible population altogether. The group of professional immigrant women is even smaller as they face some disadvantages, some similar to those of American women, but a few specific just to immigrant women. According to Kellerman

and Rhodes (2007), about 20 percent of U.S.-born women with graduate and professional degrees are not working. Although I have not been able to find a comparable study for immigrant women, it is safe to assume that the percentage is even higher.

One of the issues that most women, either U.S. born or foreign born are facing, is motherhood and child care. Eva reported that she would often take her children with her to work because she was afraid to leave them with a stranger. She also reported that she had to work harder than some of her American female colleagues. Eva often worked 10- to 12-hour-long days. When she was successful, she enjoyed perhaps more support than her American female colleagues, but on the other hand, she would receive more critique in case of failure.

For me the situation was similar, although I was not able to take my daughter to work with me. By the time I resumed my studies in the United States, my daughter was old enough to be home alone. It was not my preference but at that time was my only choice due to no family or financial resources to pay for a babysitter.

Eva and I faced immigration on our journey to leadership in higher education in slightly different ways. Eva is a visibly Latina woman but she does not have an accent. She acknowledged that she felt being treated differently as a Latina woman, adding she had “never felt discrimination” even though she admitted that she worked long hours and embraced every opportunity that led to her tenure first and later on to her leadership position.

I, on the other hand as a White woman, do not have a race issue, but I still carry an accent. As for me, I am aware that my accent sometimes surprises people; however, I am not trying to get rid of it. I believe it is a part of who I am. I have learned not to hide the fact that I am a foreign-born woman.

Another disadvantage that Eva and I shared was maneuvering through a corporate environment. Higher education environment carries a resemblance to corporate environment and has its own culture and politics. Understanding and operating within unwritten rules may add to challenges of immigrant women when considering joining senior leadership teams. Kellerman and Rhodes (2007) reported that even though men and women share certain success strategies such as hard work, managerial skills, and performance on high-visibility assignments, and demonstrate expertise, women tend to concentrate “more on relationship building while men turn their attention more to particular types of experience” (p. 387).

Just like Eva, I felt that the advantages of being foreign born outweigh the disadvantages in our leadership roles. Having the ability to speak at least two languages, we can incorporate experiences and critical thinking more so than our U.S.-born colleagues, giving us a competitive advantage that may not always be recognized. Our “two lives” enable us to be more empathetic; as Eva said, “If they [patients’ families] cry, I cry.” At one point Eva cancelled our phone interview, because the family of a newly diagnosed small child did not cope well and she felt she had to stay to support her team. Capturing others’ feelings and reality as authentically as possible is crucial in caring (Noddings, 2003). Sernak (1998) further noted that there is an essential relationship between caring and power. Even though this case study was situated in secondary education, conclusions may be highly applicable in higher education.

Another advantage Eva reported was her ability to provide leadership to other immigrant women, students, patients, or colleagues as a mentor. “One important developmental experience that affects career success is effective mentor relationships” (Ensher & Murphy, as cited in Northouse, 2010, pp. 308-309). Even though neither Eva nor I had an opportunity to have an immigrant female mentor, both of us are trying to be one. We both felt that our immigration

status helps us to understand not only immigrant women but also men. This caring aspect of leadership has been followed by a few researchers, i.e. Noddings (2003) and has been identified as a distinctively female trait. Eva reported it in words, “I love to love!” Noddings (2003) explained, “We care because we love” (p. 46).

Even though motherhood while serving as a leader can be both a blessing as well as a burden in immigrant woman’s life, perhaps more so than U.S.-born women, Eva and I saw it as an advantage. We both shared inspiration in being a mother. This notion was supported by Kellerman and Rhode (2007) when they reported that often managers’ skills resemble mothers’ skills. In addition, both of us were raised in families where education was highly regarded and excellence was expected.

When comparing events and our experiences why Eva and I chose careers in higher education, even though we had different role models, both of us shared strong emotional connections to them. In Eva’s case, it was mainly her grandmother, who took care of coffee plantation workers, giving them injections and assisting with delivering babies. Eva’s grandparents provided tremendous support for her when she relocated to the U.S. while her mother stayed in the native country. Later her professors in medical school solidified her dream to become a doctor. She knew her LPN career was not enough for her and she needed to do more. For Eva, more meant to become a physician.

In my case, my high school teacher and my professors in nursing school in my native country were very inspirational. Later on, while serving as a preceptor for young nurses, I realized that they responded very well to me and learned not only their nursing skills but also compassion and ability to cope with families of sick children. My aspirations to become a faculty member in a higher education institution were halted once I refused to become a member

of the leading political party. At that time, every educator in my native country was required to belong to the leading political party. My refusal to belong meant an inability to continue my career in academe. I was able to resume that in the U.S., though.

The importance of spousal support, while preparing for a leadership role as well as while serving as a leader, became evident in this study. Eva made clear that her husband's support is central to her ability to fully dedicate to her team. Eva also acknowledged my husband's support. Reminiscing about my first husband's beliefs about my education, I had to agree with Eva that the partner can either help or completely ruin any aspiration that may not be his. A competitive partner with more traditionalist views may not feel comfortable supporting a woman in her ever-demanding leadership position. Eva's first boyfriend and my first husband would fall into that category.

Even though Eva and I grew up halfway across the globe from each other, we both shared some values and beliefs of the same faith. Some values that were shared that we have discussed were respect to authority, dedication, and servitude to one's own family and other people. Again, these values may be more pronounced because of Eva's and my collectivistic upbringings, and they are crucial in team leadership.

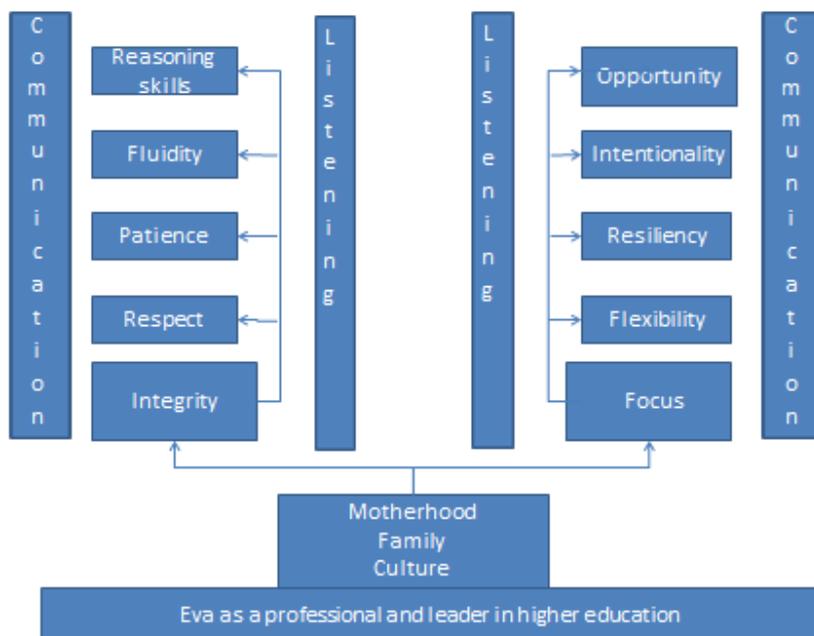
Based on all of the information collected and analyzed, Eva's journey to become and remain a successful leader in higher education has been buttressed by her focus and her integrity, rooted in her culture, family, and motherhood. These two pillars seem to provide guidance through all her life experiences that she shared with me. Once she made a commitment to participate in the study, she kept it. Also, during all narrative interviews, she rarely became distracted by outside influences (her son waiting for her) or her own thoughts and reflections if they emerged while reminiscing.

As an educational professional and an leader, Eva demonstrated the ability to recognize opportunity and to make deliberate, intentional choices. Leading a team of academic professionals and successfully managing multimillion-dollar research funds for about eight years suggests clear reasoning skills. Resiliency and especially flexibility, recognized as a “hallmark of teamwork,” allowed Eva to evaluate situations when a previous organization suddenly lost research funds, and she chose an alternative path, still keeping her original goal in mind: to help people.

In Eva’s self-reporting of an ongoing competition with the co-director of one of the research programs, Eva demonstrated patience and expressed respect. She practices similarly with her team members as well. She acknowledges and supports them, or she uses additional resources to assist them further. Living in the United States for a significant portion of her life, Eva still sees herself as a Latina woman as she amalgamates who she is and who she has become. The fluidity with which she experiences her duality allows her to harness different skills and characteristics depending on the situation at hand.

This ability helps her to provide very meaningful mentorship to other women, foreign born as well as US born. Eva shared with me that aside from helping the families of her young patients, growing and nurturing women leaders is her passion. She understands the importance of providing an immigrant woman with mentorship; her mentors were mostly White U.S.-born males. Eva expressed her gratitude and respect to them and stated that she now feels better prepared because of their support. In summary, key elements to Eva’s success as well as mine as a leader in a higher institution, can be visualized in the following figure (see Figure 2).

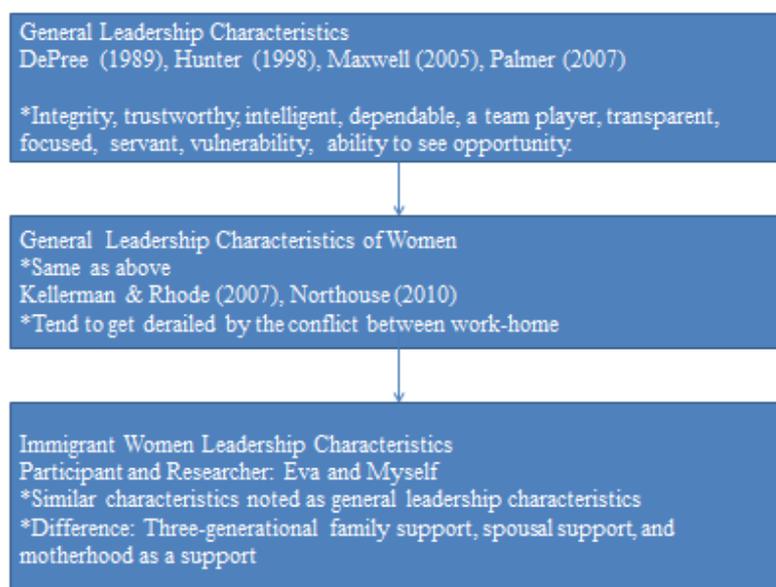
FIGURE 2: Observed Characteristics Influencing Eva's Career Choice



Considering the above mentioned characteristics of Eva's leadership style: communication, listening, integrity, respect, patience, fluidity, reasoning skills, focus, flexibility, resiliency, intentionality, and opportunity, as compared to the general characteristics of a leader (DePree, 1989; Hunter, 1998; Maxwell, 2005; & Palmer, 2007), it appears there is a strong resemblance. Even though we cannot generalize, Eva's characteristics of strength are applicable for immigrant women in other fields outside higher education such as in the K-12 school systems, medical field, the corporate world, and government. Kellerman and Rhode (2007) and Northouse (2010) further suggested similar characteristics for female leaders, but they also observed that often women need to choose between career and family. That does not appear to be the case in Eva's and my story; on the contrary, there seems to be a strong family and spousal support. My literature reviewed suggested that generally, it is the immigrant woman who sacrifices her own goals and dreams to support her spouse and family and behaves in a more

traditional way. Eva's, as well as my story, offer a different outlook: a three-generational family support system, including spouse and motherhood, seem to provide the main sustenance in building a successful career as professional women. Although I cannot generalize, my study seems to suggest that immigrant women in leadership positions in higher education exhibit leadership characteristics, they also possess characteristics that are more prevalent for female leaders, i.e., a traditionally tighter connection to family, spousal support, and the motherhood experience (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: Leadership Characteristics from the General to the Specific



Implications

Americans pride themselves on being a nation of immigrants. They like to pass heroic immigrant stories from generation to generation, and they do not mind researching from where their ancestors came. Millions of immigrants seem to listen to Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus" engraved inside the Statue of Liberty promising the "huddled masses" new life.

However, even the great nation's leader Benjamin Franklin fell victim to a dichotomy when he called German immigrants "stupid and ignorant" in one of his speeches on May 9, 1753. More current stories of families separated by forceful deportation and an Arizona law requiring immigrants to carry their registration documents at all times deny the immigrant nature of the United States and place immigrants into a negative light.

Despite all the negative publicity about immigration, there are positive stories, stories that show immigrants as those that make the United States better, one person at a time. Eva's story is a simple example. Her contributions to this country include not only the search for a treatment for an incurable childhood disease that would benefit the entire world if discovered, but also Eva's effects on the lives of her colleagues, students, patients, and their parents and families. She is fully devoted to those people around her. If they cry, she cries. If they celebrate, she celebrates. And she leaves another legacy: her five children, who are raised according to their parents' values and beliefs.

It may be difficult to generalize findings from this study due to the individuality of the story. If we as a society want to understand the world of immigrants, we need to recognize that the immigration population consists of many singular persons. The major contribution of this study is an understanding of how a woman may experience the process of leaving her homeland and relocating into a new country and what forces may carry her through that journey.

Recommendations for Future Study

There is a crucial need to understand experiences of immigrant men and immigrant women in American academe. They not only facilitate learning and provide leadership to American-born stakeholders, they do that for international students and faculty as well. The more we understand what it means to go through leaving their original country and then the

acculturation and assimilation processes in the United States, the better resources, education, and perhaps legislature we can provide to the immigration population as a whole and more so, to professionals who have immigrated to the United States.

During the course of this study, other topics surfaced that would possibly shed more light on the subject matter. One area to explore would be whether there is a difference in success depending on where foreign-born women earned their terminal degree. Another topic that is worthy of study is whether the success of an immigrant woman is related to her age at the time of her arrival in the United States. A study that could help the overall understanding of how successful immigrant women are perceived could look at whether a successful woman was hired from outside or promoted through the ranks. Based on the participant's reporting in this study, where she attributed part of her success to her spouse, another recommended research topic could be to investigate the relationship of marital status as well as whether in the family support makes a difference on building a professional career for immigrant women. Another topic worth investigating that surfaced during this study could be to explore the effects of motherhood on building a professional career for women, in general, and compare to immigrant women. Additionally, a comparison of academic leadership success between foreign-born women and native-born women could advance the topic.

Conclusion

Now, when I conducted the study, I would like to believe that Eva's and my stories together brought to the forefront the face of immigration, the understanding that behind every statistic there is a human being who may be experiencing the immigration process their own way, responding to events in their life utilizing their own upbringing, values, and belief systems. More so, this study attempted to emphasize some issues that a foreign-born woman may be

facing during her resettlement process in the United States, including her challenges, her similarities, and her differences with native-born women while still negotiating a leadership position in a higher education institution.

“To speak, to think, to eat, and to dream in more than one language.” (Danquah, 2000, p. 19)

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Appendix A

Letter of Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Mrs. / Ms. / Dr. _____,

Your consent is being asked to be granted to participate in the qualitative research study about foreign-born women that have chosen the path of an administrator of higher education institution in the country.

I am a doctoral student at George Fox University. This study is going to be a base for my dissertation in order to complete my doctoral degree. I have chosen to tell in-depth story of a woman that came to the United States, holds a doctoral degree, and serves as an administrator in a higher education institution.

Your participation will require 1-3 face-to-face interviews and 1-3 phone or synchronous on-line sessions, each about 1- 1 and ½ hour long. This has to be your volunteered time. During these one-on-one interviews, I will ask you a series of questions that will help me to understand your life story regarding the topic of this research. I particularly will be interested in your career as an administrator in a higher education institution and what does it mean to you. Because you are a professional, I understand that your time is very precious, and I will try to keep these interviews only as long as you wish them to be, providing that I will receive information that is needed for this research.

The results of this research may be published; however, your identity will not be revealed to anyone. I assure you that your identifiable information will be kept confidential. Any records that may contain any identifiable information will be personally destroyed by me either right after the research is completed or no later than three years after.

I do not foresee any risks to you associated with this research; however, if you have any concerns, please contact me either by my phone 208-484-8842 or my email eduvator@gmail.com. I hope your answer will be favorable to this research that will help me to construct a picture of a successful foreign-born woman.

Yes, I give my permission to participate in the interviews that will be audio recorded.

Participant Signature

Date

Helena Hanson, the researcher

Date

Appendix B

Guiding Interview Questions

1. What is your age?
2. How old were you when you arrived in the United States?
3. Where did you earn in the United States?
4. What was your job when you left?
5. What jobs have you held in the United States?
6. What is your current job?
7. What country were you born (country)?
8. What language was spoken mostly at home?
9. What degree(s) did you earn in your native country?

Interview #1 Initial Interview

1. What country are you from? Why did you come to the United States? And are you planning to and live here? Are you planning to go back?
2. Why didn't you feel safe when you were there? (In the original country)
3. Why did you go to medical school?
4. When you went back to your original country, you had to relearn Spanish again. You pretty much you had to learn it twice. Correct? Please elaborate.
5. You mentioned that you had an accent. You had English accent in Spanish. Were you different because of that within your cohort? How?

6. What else do you think helped you? What else helped you to get through (medical) school?
7. What kind of person do you think you would be if you would marry your former boyfriend, the one you dated before your husband?

Interview #2 Follow-Up Interview

1. Who is Eva? Tell me about Eva. Who is she? Who are you?
2. How much of your mom and grandma is in you?
3. Do you see yourself as awoman or American woman? Do you see yourself as both? Do you separate that?
4. What does it mean to you to be a foreign-born woman in your position and being successful?
5. Did you feel that you had to work harder, perhaps, than if you were not foreign-born woman?
6. At home, do you cook American or do you cook foods that you grew up with in your original country? What do you eat? What holidays do you celebrate? Do you celebrate U.S. holidays or do you celebrate holidays from your original country?
7. How would your life look like if you were to return to your original country?
8. Do you consider yourself to be more successful than American woman, than average American woman?
9. Among your students, do you have some young girls or women that are not born in the United States? Do you have some foreign-born students?

10. Are you happy with your life?

Interview #3 Follow-up Interview

1. What did you have to do to become licensed in the US (if anything)? How was that process for you? Were there any barriers that you had to overcome? Perhaps, it gave you advantage?
2. How were you treated during your school years here in the U.S? You have mentioned that you had to learn English language. Please share your thoughts, feelings, experience.
3. Did any of that experience support your interest in medicine in addition to the influence of your family?
4. I am also trying to come up with a time line: you came to the US when you were 7-8 years old, and you studied here through high school - approximately until 17-18 years old. Then you went to your original country and spend seven years there to study medicine that would mean that you returned when you were about 25 years old. Did you have to undergo some additional training here (this will tie to the question 1). What barriers, if any, did you have to overcome as a young physician that earned her degree outside of the U.S? Or perhaps your education was welcomed without any concerns? Please share your experience, thoughts and feelings about that time. What and who was your support system at that time?
5. I am also looking to find out how did your professional path look like from the time you arrived to the US and became a researcher. I do not know if you feel comfortable to share

your age, but I am guessing that you are about 8-10 years younger than me (I am 51). Am I close?

6. Why do you think you are in your position, and not your competitor?
7. You said, “You have to be strong and you have to stand your ground, or you get pushed over.”
8. What are your strengths that helped you to do that?
9. I believe, you mentioned that there were four siblings. I know about your sister. Tell me about your brothers. Where they and what are they doing?
10. You said that while living in your native country, you learned to appreciate of what it was to be born there. Tell me more.
11. You also mentioned (when you talked about that you want your children to know that there are different) that it is different how the community in your original country expects “you to be”. How is it? And how is it different from the way community expects you to be here in the United States, if any.
12. You said that you have to constantly force yourself to be better? Why? What makes you to want to be better? Where is the source of your need to be better every day?
13. I would like hear more about your husband. He went to medical school with you but then later you talk about him as a teacher. Can you explain?
14. Where did the funds come from for you to be able to go through the CNA and LPN programs? (I know you mentioned that the LPN was a pilot program; does that mean that it was free for you as a student?)
15. You shared with me that you went to your original country to study medicine because the process was too intense in the US. Would you please elaborate? Why did you choose to

study in your original country and not in the U.S., when your entire schooling was done here?

16. How was your school funded in your original country? I do not recall if you worked through med school; who supported you through the med school?

17. I understand correctly, your mom lived in your original country and she came for your high school graduation. Then both of you went back so you could start study medicine. Was it at this time that your mom worked for government? You mentioned that she started her own business. What kind of business was that?

Interview #4 Follow-Up Interview.

Scheduled but Eva could not make it.

Interview #5 Follow-Up Interview.

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of foreign-born woman in a leadership position in the US higher education?
2. At one point you mentioned that while in medical school, one clinical site was not a good experience. This is the site that you were able to exchange from with your husband's assistance. Why was it a good clinical experience? Can you elaborate a little?
3. What experiences and events took place in your life that contributed to your decision to follow a career path to higher education?
4. In what ways are you similar and what ways are you different from other foreign-born women you know? From your peers that are born in the US?

5. Judging from your description of grandpa and your mother's name, and from reading about settlers in your original country, I am guessing that perhaps your ancestors have German or similar background. Is that safe to assume that?