NEW INGREDIENTS IN THE MELTING POT: KAZAKHS, KYRGYZ AND UZBEKS

by

Nargis Davletmendova

Mentor

William B. Helmreich, PhD

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TO MY LOVELY MOTHER, MUKHTABAR DAVLETMENKOVA WHO
I WILL HOPEFULLY SEE VERY SOON.....
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the life of immigrants from three Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan living in New York. I will explore the reasons for their migration to the US, the problems that immigrants from these countries face here. I will also explore where these communities live, how they adjust to their new lives. The focus will be oriented on defining the following set of questions: Where do immigrants work? Where do they live? Are they happier living in the US or in their homelands? Do they plan to go back? My analysis will include the economic, social, political, and religious aspects that cause the growing migration of the citizens of these countries to the US. The main hypothesis I am going to test by conducting this research project is: Most of the Central Asian immigrants move to the US for economic reasons, i.e. the lack of jobs and money in their home countries. Is it true or not?

The findings of this research project are based on a case study that includes in-depth interviews with Central Asian immigrants currently living in the New York metropolitan area.

There were numerous studies conducted on the topic of immigration to the US, but the researchers didn’t pay much attention to the immigrants from Central Asia by referring to them as Russian immigrants. Most of the research on Soviet immigrants was conducted from the economic, historical, and political perspectives. My research, on the other hand, looks at this issue through the sociological lenses. It focuses more on the human side of this phenomenon.
And this yet, at least as far as I know, is the first study that explores the life of immigrants from Central Asia in New York. This study contributes to various fields such as psychology, migration, family studies, demography, and international studies.
PREFACE

Have you ever thought how much time a week you spend on the subway? I live in Brooklyn, Sheepshead Bay which is one subway stop from Brighton Beach. In order for me to get to City College I have to make two subway transfers: the B train from Sheepshead Bay to 59th street, "Columbus Circle" and then the 1 train to 135th street, "City College". It is an hour and a half ride three days a week, two times a day. So it is nine hours on the train. Add another eight hours a week that is spent to travel to work and back home. To summarize, I spend seventeen hours of my life every week on the train. Within the first month after I've purchased an iPod I was sick and tired of it. I tried to read novels, but books are too heavy to carry around. I got rid of the habit of sleeping on the train right after someone tried to rob me. What is there left to do for seventeen hours a week?

It is amazing how by just riding the train one can see how incredibly diverse New York is. As you take the train on Sheepshead Bay you mostly see the Russian speaking people, when the train proceeds to Neck Road and Avenue U bilingualism takes place by adding Chinese speech to Russian. Then Kings Highway: that's where it becomes hard to keep track of ethnicities, but still possible to identify the majority which are Hebrew, Russian and Turkish and, of course, Chinese. In several stops we get to Church Avenue which fills the subway car with Blacks and Latinos. It takes a couple of stops and a bridge to get to Grand street that adds more Chinese people to the subway cars. As soon you get on the uptown 1 train you see the mix of different ethnicities the majority of whom are Latinos and Blacks. The more the train proceeds in its uptown direction the less diverse the content of it becomes by remaining mostly Blacks and Latinos in its cars. New York is the most diverse city in the United States and one of the top diverse cities in the world. There are about 170 languages spoken in New York.
While completing my Master’s degree at The City College of New York I also work part time at a bar in SoHo, New York. My name is Nargis. I am 24. I am an ethnic Uzbek who was born and raised in Kazakhstan. Working in a hospitality sphere means constant interaction with different people. Hispanic customers usually talk Spanish to me and when I tell them I don’t speak Spanish they get surprised and say: “Where are you from?” When I tell them I am from Kazakhstan they get even more surprised and say: “But you don’t look Russian?!” Then I tell them a story about the Soviet Union that consisted of fifteen republics, five of which were Central Asian: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. I explain that people from Central Asia not only look completely different from Russians but their looks also vary between each other. Kazakh people for instance look more oriental while Uzbeks look Hispanic according to the American standards. Kyrgyz look much like Kazakhs and by looking at Tajik one might think he is an Uzbek.

I don’t blame Americans for confusing Central Asian people with other ethnicities because I have experienced it myself when riding home on the NYC subway. An oriental looking man started flirting with me in Spanish and I replied to him in Spanish also, just for fun. The conversation wasn’t long for two reasons: the level of our Spanish didn’t exceed: “Hola! Come esta? – Bien, y tu?” and my phone suddenly rang. It was my Russian speaking friend on the phone and of course our dialog was in Russian. As soon as I hung up the phone the “Chinese” looking guy said: “Ti govorish’ po-russki?!” which in Russian means: “Do you speak Russian?!” I could see it on his face that he was totally blown away when he heard me speaking Russian. I was also very surprised when it turned out he was from Kazakhstan.
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INTRODUCTION

When living in New York it is very difficult to say to what ethnical background one belongs due to the diverse nationalities of its residents. Therefore very often we don’t realize that the amount of immigrants from Central Asian republics is growing day by day. We see them every day in five different boroughs of New York, mostly in Brooklyn though, and take them as Chinese, Filipinos or Hispanics. If there was a scanner that could detect the ethnical background of a person by just pointing at him the one who owns it [scanner] would probably be astonished at the amount of Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek immigrants residing in NYS. They form their own communities, open the restaurants that serve their national dishes, shop at the local supermarkets that sell Uzbek “lepiyoshki”, Kyrgyz “tan” or Kazakh “kumis”, attend parties where they socialize with their fellow countrymen, go to the concerts where the singers and comedians from their native land perform, go on vacations, get married, have children and etc… Reading this, one might think: “What a beautiful life these immigrants have!” In fact there life is not a path strewn with roses.

This study examines the life of immigrants from the three Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan in New York. I will explore the reasons for their migration to the US, the problems that immigrants from these countries face here. I will also explore where these communities live, how they adjust to their new lives. The focus will be oriented on defining the aspects of the migrants’ new lives that they like/dislike as well as defining the reasons for the growing amount of people leaving their homelands and moving to

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1 Traditional Uzbek bread called ‘issiq non’ in Uzbek or ‘lepyoshka’ in Russian is baked in the form of circular flat loaves in Tandyr (special earthware furnace).

2 Beverage made of yogurt, salt and carbonated water.

3 A fermented dairy product traditionally made from mare’s milk.
America. My analysis will include the economic, social, political, religious, military aspects that cause the growing migration of the citizens of these countries to the US. The attention will also be paid on how these immigrants adapt to American culture, the types of jobs they do, whether they are satisfied with their new lives or no.

**Research questions and contribution**

The collapse of Soviet Union caused a lot of changes in different spheres of life of its citizens such as “evolution of market economy and a reduction in the rural employment market” (Abdullaev, E. 2008, 12). The major outcome of the USSR’s breakdown was the tremendous loss of it’s the population. The Central Asian Human Development Report represents the following data: from 1989 to 2002 Kazakhstan lost 3 million of its population which equals to about 20% of its total population. 4% (1 million) of Uzbek population left their homeland. 360,000 people or 7% of citizens left Kyrgyzstan (Abdullaev, E. 2008). Most of these people left their homes for one major reason - the lack of jobs. People were in search of better opportunities, better life, and better future for their children. As a result they immigrated to different parts of the globe. A lot of them immigrated to the US in hope for a positive change. Have their dreams come true? Did they find what they were looking for? Did the process of adaptation go smooth or did they have to go through a lot of difficulties? Did they speak English or there was a language barrier? Where did they settle down? What do they do for a living? How do they socialize? Are they keeping their identities? What is attractive to them about this country? Why do they extend their stay in the US even though they saved enough money to go back home? How have things changed in New York? The major religion of Central Asia is Islam. Did 9/11 affect them? If yes, how? Are they marrying different nationalities? Do they live in the same neighborhood? Where
are these neighborhoods located? Do they have children? What is happening to their children: do they become more Americanized? What is their status? Are they staying in the country illegally or not?

There were numerable studies conducted on the topic of immigration to the US, but the researchers didn't pay much attention on the immigrants from Central Asia by referring them to Russian immigrants. Most of the researches on Soviet immigrants were conducted from the economic, historical, and political perspectives. My research, on the other hand, looks at this issue through the sociological lenses. It focuses more on a human side of this phenomenon. And this yet, at least as far as I know, is the first study that explores the life of immigrants from Central Asia in New York. This study contributes to various fields such as psychology, migration, family studies, demography, and international studies.

**Hypotheses**

The main hypothesis I am going to test by conducting this research project is: Most of the Central Asian immigrants move to the US for economic reasons, i.e. the lack of jobs and money in their home countries. Is it true or not? There is couple of other hypotheses that I am going to test. Immigrants don't realize that in fact it is not money that makes them stay in the US, but the change of their mentality, i.e. they become Americanized. After saving enough money to have a good life back home the majority of immigrants still stay in the US and the ones who do go back regret for doing that. The immigrants' families back home have a huge influence in feeding the unwillingness of the immigrants to go back home.

**Research design: a case study**
The topic of immigration has been given considerable quantitative as well as qualitative attention, and much of it is focused on the immigration from China, Europe, Mexico or Africa to the United States. Yet there is quite little research done on the immigration to the US from Central Asia. I focus my research on three main aspects: defining the reasons for immigration from Central Asia to the US, the types of immigrants and the new lives of immigrants in New York. In this case qualitative research is an excellent way to shed some light on this issue. What factors contribute to the immigration? Why Central Asians choose United States as their final destination? Are they satisfied with their new lives here? Do they plan to go back? Are they educated? What types of jobs they do upon their arrival to the US? Where their communities are located? How do they deal with the issue of language barrier? In order to answer these questions I use a case study research method that is mostly based on interviews with labor migrants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Here my ability to fluently speak and understand Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek and Kyrgyz is of a huge advantage and help in conducting this research project. The case study research method in my opinion is the most appropriate in this situation due to its ability to answer “why” and “how” questions. (Yin 1994, 9) My goal here is to explain why an increasing amount of Central Asian citizens migrate to the US and how they [immigrants] adapt to their new lives in the “soulless city of unlimited opportunities”\(^4\), i. e. New York.

According to W. F. White (1955) there is a crucial importance of having the support of the key individuals in any groups or organizations. Case study allowed me to make strong ties with a couple of people that later introduced me other respondents. Another advantage of the case study is that it allows a researcher to conduct observations in the natural settings, therefore providing an opportunity to study human actions in the environment that is natural to the respondents.

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\(^4\) This is a literal translation provided by the author based on the answer of one of the immigrants to the question: “How would you define New York”.

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(Orum, Feagin, and Sjoberg 1991) By doing so not only I had an opportunity to find out where these communities live but also to plunge in the rhythm of their lives, meet their friends and through them find more respondents for my research. It also gave me a chance to be able to attend couple of the events which I will talk about later on in this paper.

Data Collection

The respondents for the study were found in three different ways. The first group of respondents consisted of immigrants who I knew, i.e. my social ties, the second sample consisted of people who I literally found by going out to the neighborhood supermarkets, drug stores, liquor stores, restaurants, jewelry stores, coffee shops and shoe repair locations. And finally the third type of respondents was found through a snowball sampling method. When using a snowball sampling method a researcher “identifies one member of the population and speaks to him or her, then asks that person to identify others in the population and speak to them, then asks them to identify others, and so on.”(Chambliss and Schutt 2006, 101)

The sample that I do my research based consists of twenty eight immigrants from the three Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan: fourteen men and the same amount of women. They all reside in New York. The respondents in my sample are mostly from the middle class and came to New York for various reasons which makes the results of my study more reliable. All of the respondents in the sample speak Russian and their native language, some part speaks English. All names of the respondents were changed due to the issues of ethics. The table above displays the country of origin of the respondents as well as their gender and quantity.

1.1 Table: The content of the sample
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin/gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N) 28</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that I am one of them gives a personal interest to do this study. To tell you more about why researchers sometimes pick certain groups for their studies I will cite C. F. Nachmias again from the same book that I mentioned before: “Very often, the selection of the topic is influenced by personal interests or concerns. Such concerns may be related to the researcher’s job, personal relationships, family history, social class, or ethnic background.” (C. F. Nachmias 1999, p.260) And finally, I decided to follow J. Lofland and L. H. Lofland’s advice, given in their useful guide to doing qualitative research, called “Analyzing Social Settings”, where the authors describe this process as “starting where you are.” (J. Lofland and L. H. Lofland 1984, p.7). So I made up my mind to take something from my experience which I could build on. Finally The group of Central Asian immigrants possessed unique characteristics which made an interesting study.

**Interviews with immigrants**

Before interviewing I collected some data about the respondents, which helped me later in creating and organizing my questions. As L. Schatzman states in his book called “Field Research”: “observation, eavesdropping, brief questioning, and casual conversation are very important; they eventually provide a broad context for effective and economical interviewing.” (Schatzman, L. 1973, 71). In order to prepare for interviews I interviewed the
respondents briefly before. My purpose was to set up a strong basis for my future interviews so when preparing for the interviews I would know what kind of questions to ask.

Of the four main methods of qualitative research which are: in depth interviews, group interviews, projective techniques, and participant observation the latter is the archetypal qualitative method where the subjects are studied in their natural environment. That is the method I used in my field research. There are two types of the participant observation method: objective observer who does the research through interviewing, and approaches a culture from outside, and the participant observer who reaches the culture from within.

Since I, myself am an immigrant from Kazakhstan who is currently doing a low wage labor in my research I was a participant observer because I belong to the same group of immigrants. I share the same beliefs, interests and traditions as other immigrants from Central Asian republics. I introduced myself and my study to each of the interviewed immigrants from the very beginning. My ethnical background, the ability to fluently communicate in Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek as well as my social ties were of a great aid in finding the respondents. Even though most of the immigrants had a language barrier I didn’t have issues while interviewing them. Speaking the same language also warmed up the atmosphere making it more of a conversation between two friends rather than an interviewing procedure. Since it is my first language I was able to understand their slang and interpret it. In “Research methods in the Social Sciences” Chava Frankfort Nachmias states: “One basic requirement……is that the observer understands the jargon used by the particular group.”(C. F. Nachmias 1999, p. 263.)

The use in-depth interviews as well as personal experiences of the observed helped me a lot in uncovering new clues, opening up new dimensions of this issue. One of the main advantages of the in-depth interviewing method that I used in my research is that it helped me to probe
complex issues, clarify the answers and obtain sensitive information. By using qualitative methods in my research I can be sure that the results of the research are accurate because they were based on the answers which were gained with the help of various approaches used with different members of the immigrant group depending on their personal differences

**Typing, but not taping!**

I used different methods of data collection in the study, such as taking notes, observing and interviewing. There are also two other methods widely used by field researchers which I decided to skip: tape recording and photographing or videotaping.

During the period of interaction between the observed group of Central Asian immigrants and myself, data was systematically, but unobtrusively collected in the form of field notes. I did not use a tape recorder at all while interviewing. Why? I wanted the respondents to forget they were being observed so that their behavior and interaction remain natural. Field notes provide a literal account of the happenings. According to Schatzman, L. (1973) the researcher’s notes should be very brief. He states that a single word, even one merely descriptive of the dress of a person, or a particular word uttered by someone usually is enough to “trip off” a string of images that afford substantial reconstruction of the observed scene. Notes give the researcher some comfort because they seem to dam up a moderate tide of data. While taking the notes I followed Schatzman’s advice from his book “Field Research” “to categorically order and chronologically sequence the multitude of items in my note pad” (Schatzman, L. 1973, 96). It helped me a lot.

Recording in the presence of the group serves as a reminder of my agenda, which may influence the behavior of the group and also may limit my ability to participate in their activities. Some parts of the interviews were too private for the observed, so to the respect the members of the group I tried not to take notes, but memorize them. Because I did my research on immigrants
the topics we touched were very private. In those cases I relied on mnemonic devices to help me to remember.

I am a hundred percent sure that my decision to take notes instead of using a tape recorder affected the quality of the responses. People were very relaxed and natural during our conversations. This can be clearly observed from the interviews with respondents. Irving Seidman’s book called “Interviewing as Qualitative Research” served as a useful tool in constructing my questions and its order. He states in his book: “Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. .... Interviewing allows us to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their action.” (Seidman, I., 1998, 4) In my opinion the question-answer form is very effective for a researcher trying to control the flow of information.

Data Analysis

When analyzing the data I used the inductive strategy which is one of the qualitative research methods because it starts with collecting the data and then develops a theory that explains it. (Chambliss & Schutt, 2006). After conducting the in depth interviews with immigrants I developed the theories based on the data from the interviews. The inductive research circle that starts with data, then develops the latter into empirical generalizations, progresses them into theory, and finally brings the hypothesis is the characteristic feature of the qualitative research because the researcher doesn’t have a certain theory in the beginning but on contrary draws it based on the data collected from the interviews. (Chambliss & Schutt, 2006).

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5 The status of immigrants in the US is a very private topic since most of them stay in the country illegally, therefore it would be inappropriate of me to use a tape-recorder.
Grounded theory developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss was widely used in my research when analyzing the data. It is very convenient in qualitative research since it offers a researcher to name and code the indicators of categories taken from the behaviors and events and then compare the codes in order to find the consistencies and differences. (Strauss, A., 1987) Following this technique I found similar meanings from the interviews that pointed to basic ideas that revealed the categories. In analyzing the data I also used the “typology” method suggested by John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (1995). I classified the data from the interviews into different categories which according to the authors ideally should be mutually exclusive and exhaustive, but often they aren’t. Following Howard Becker’s quasi-statistical method of analysis I counted the number of times respondents mentioned some topics in my field notes and used it as evidence for some of my categories. In order to that I divided my notebook into separate sections (separate section for each of the questions). If more than one respondent provided the same answer to the same question I used a highlighter of certain color to indicate it. I found this way to be very convenient when organizing my field notes and creating categories based on them. All data collected from the interviews was carefully separated into different groups in the “findings” section of this paper. Since this is a qualitative research the results of the study are presented in the narrative format. When organizing the data from the interviews besides using the narrative format I also used one of the qualitative methods to summarize the interviews. Using SPSS I entered the data in frequency distributions. The latter makes it more convenient for a reader to see the differences between the categories because the information is provided in a compact form. I also interpreted the frequencies into the percentages because “they are especially useful for making the comparisons”. (Nachmias, C. F. & Leon-Guerrero, A., 2009, 33)
LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2007 the remittances to Kyrgyzstan constituted 27 percent of its GDP, or US $322 million. Uzbeks, whose remittances composed over 8 percent of GDP, sent $1.3 billion in the same year. Of all Central Asian countries Tajikistan appeared to be the leader in the proportion of remittances to its GDP – 30 percent. Tajik migrants sent over US $1.8 billion. (Marat, E., 2009) In the times of economic crises remittances are considered as a stable capital flow according to the data of the World Bank. As Erica Marat (2009) states the governments of Central Asia make little effort to create jobs for their citizens. As a result such countries as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan experience the mass loss of population. A good example would be the year 2008 when the Kyrgyz president Kurmanbek Bakiyev abruptly increased taxes for businesses. The outcome of that was the shutting down of hundreds of small businesses. Accordingly it caused the loss of jobs. Citizens left their homeland in search of jobs.

Evgeniy Abdullaev’s (2008) research on immigration from Uzbekistan shows that the key reasons for migration is economic problems. As migrants stated in the study their decision to immigrate was due to the dissatisfaction with their income. E. Abdullaev found that most of the women moved abroad because of the divorce, loss of a breadwinner, and unemployment. Other reasons for immigration that were frequently mentioned by the respondents were the need for money to educate children and buy property in their homelands. According to the author most of the Uzbeks leave their homeland to seek employment overseas. The data from his study designates that the decisions to migrate are most of the times made by immigrant. According to different sources about 45% of the population of Uzbekistan lives on less than $1.25 a day.

The results of the same study demonstrate that the reasons for growing migration activity in Uzbekistan can be linked to failure to find a job. As it was found in the research the lack of jobs
that are relevant to the profession along with low wages are serious motives for leaving the country. The study points out the big distinction in job opportunities between men and women. Women are eager to take any job, while men usually strive for better paid positions. The results from the interviews conducted by the in the course of that study imply the following reasons for immigration in Uzbekistan: building a house, forthcoming marriage, payments for education in higher educational institutions. The main reason for immigration as it was found is the providing help for growing children. There is also a huge difference in the opinions of government officials who claim that there is a plenty of jobs and the population that states exactly the opposite.

Immigration from Kazakhstan has a huge negative influence not only on the country’s population size but also on the structure of its population. Scholars estimate that during the years of independence of the country the outflow of its population equals to about 2 - 4.2 million persons. The outflow of population negatively affected the state’s economy. The age of migrants ranges from 18 to 48. In other words the country lost a tremendous part of its working age population. Most of those people had undergraduate and graduate degrees and were high skilled workers. Why would people leave the country that already suffers of the extremely low population size? Comparing the size of the country to its population size one might think that it is just a waste of space. The basic reasons for immigration are: high unemployment rates in the country and urban areas, difficult economic and political situation, the lack of perspectives for citizens and especially for the younger generation, language barrier, and finally the opportunity which wasn’t there at the times of Soviet Union existence, to move to the country of ethnical background (Russians – to Russia, Uzbeks – to Uzbekistan). The jump in migration flows occurred in the 1990s. From 1991-1996 two million people left the country. As a result of immigration Kazakhstan lost: in 1991 - 22,2%, in 1992 - 89,3% of natural increase of its
population and in 1993 and 1994 the loss of population due to immigration exceeded its natural increase by 1.4 and 2.8 times accordingly. 1994 was the peak year for the republic since it lost 480 thousand of its citizens.

Contemporary immigration processes in Kazakhstan can be linked to the whole complex of reasons. Among them are political, environmental and socio-economic factors that determine the standard of living. The collapse of the Soviet Union accompanied by a decline in production, the rise of inflation, increasing unemployment (especially covert) has exacerbated the economic crisis, which led in turn to lower living standards and the crisis of the social sphere. According to the World Bank the index of real wages in Kazakhstan in 1994 was the lowest compared with other former Soviet countries. According to the official data the average wage in December 1996 was 8,770.1 tenge, or $121 which wasn’t enough to cover citizens’ means of subsistence and the reproduction of labor power.

In recent years the pace of income growth significantly lagged behind the growth of prices on daily use products. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan the level of income at the beginning of 1995 amounted to approximately 26% of its 1989 level. When the national currency was input in November in 1993 prices have risen almost 35-fold, and since the beginning of pricing reforms (January 1992) - 18 thousand times. Even though the economic situation nowadays is getting way better in 1990s there was a large number of people in Kazakhstan whose per capita income was below the poverty line. In November 1992 this population group composed 11.9%, in June 1995 it ranged from 37 to 44% of the total population. The systematic debt of enterprises and organizations in payment of wages, which in January 1997 has reached 47.9 billion tenge or $660 million, has a negative impact on income levels and social situation in general. The ongoing crisis in the economy accompanied by
growing unemployment caused high immigration rates. Expert estimated the unemployment rate in 1995 reached 10% and remained the same in 1996.

Multiple studies show that along with the migration policy factors the socio-economic ones are equally of a high influence. Taking into account the amount of people immigrating to Russia-the country which is also not in a great economic shape it is clearly not only due to economic situation. An increased impact of political reasons for immigration is reflected the migration statistics in 1994-95. During these years the immigration was intensified by the authoritarian tendencies in government. The two dissolutions of Parliament in December 1993 and March 1995 as well as April 1995 referendum to extend the power of the President up to 2000 are the evidence of an increased tendency in immigration. Many international experts, including representatives of OSCE\(^6\) participating as observers for the parliamentary elections in March 1994, noted the significant violations during the electoral campaign and election process, such as the arbitrary denial of registration of candidates, the restriction of the media in covering elections the details of elections. OSCE observers concluded that in spite of effective organization in the polling sites, there were some very serious remarks which may question the commitment of Kazakhstan to conduct democratic elections. According to the Freedom House\(^7\) (USA) which classifies all countries by the following groups: free, partly free and not free, depending on the exercise of fundamental political rights and civil liberties, Kazakhstan classified as non-free countries in 1994-1995. The rating of the country for political rights was six out of seven and for Civil Liberties – five out seven. According to experts due to the growing tensions between ethnic

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\(^6\) The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organization.

\(^7\) Freedom House is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Washington, D.C. that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom and human rights. It publishes an annual report assessing the degree of perceived democratic freedoms in each country, which is used in political science research.
Russians and Kazakhs civil liberties rating declined in 1994-95 from four to five. The same survey conducted in 1995 – 1996 showed that Kazakhstan continues to belong to the category of not free countries with the same rating.

Article 7 of the new constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan states: “1. The state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan shall be the Kazak language. 2. In state institutions and local self-administrative bodies the Russian language shall be officially used on equal grounds along with the Kazak language.” Under the new Constitution Russian language is not the second state language. Although according to the government organizations and local authorities "... along with the Kazakh Russian language can be officially used”, in fact not speaking Kazakh is a major reason for limiting the opportunities to work in public services or pursuing political career and this therefore is the main factor of immigration of non Kazakhs.

Another reason for immigration from Kazakhstan is the discrimination of non Kazakhs in professional and political careers as well as education sphere which is reflected in the fact that the majority of public authorities (80%) are ethnical Kazakhs. All this, along with declining social and economic status, and great uncertainty about their future in Kazakhstan, makes non Kazakh people leave the country.

According to the sociological study\(^8\) conducted by Hiller Institute there was a general dissatisfaction of population with the situation in the country: in 1996 90% of respondents were dissatisfied with the social security system, 87% were dissatisfied with quality of health services and the war against crime. Only 33% were satisfied with civil and political rights, 28% expressed satisfaction with the electoral systems and 27% were satisfied with educational system.

\(^8\) the Institute Hiller, who carried out a sociological study with the participation and leadership of the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES, USA) in 1996
Table 2.1 Corruption Perceptions Index 1999-2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>KAZAKHSTAN</th>
<th>KYRGYZSTAN</th>
<th>UZBEKISTAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Transparency International: The Global Coalition Against Corruption

Table 2.1 Corruption Perceptions Index 1999-2010 reveals the facts that can be linked to the reasons of increased immigration from Central Asian countries to the US. The data is based on the annual survey. Even though Kazakhstan’s corruption perception index has improved from 1999-2010 to 0.6 points none of the three Central Asian republics have increased their corruption perception index to even 1.0 point. In the findings section I will present the results of the interviews on the topic: “was high level of corruption in your home country one of the reasons for your immigration?”

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9 The table above was composed by the author using the data from the [http://www.transparency.org/](http://www.transparency.org/). The scale system in the table above ranges from 1 to 10. The higher the score the less corrupted the country is, the less the score the more corrupted the country is.
According to Irina Ivakhnyuk (2006) Kazakhstan had suffered losses due to the outflow of highly skilled professionals in the 1990s. As reported by Ivakhnyuk scholars from Central Asian countries immigrate to the United States and work for the American universities. A large part of these high skilled professionals have immigrated forever. That according to the author is due to low wages as well as the diminished prestige of intellectual labor. This, as an outcome is harmful to all spheres such as economics, medicine, international relations and for the society as well. The massive loss of the country’s brains negatively influences its development.
FINDINGS

Reasons for immigration

Employment opportunities

The analysis of the flow of international migration shows that both the nature and direction of international migration in various parts of the globe have significantly changed over time. People seek for the better places to live that offer more opportunities for the bright future of their children and more importantly the jobs that can provide for their living. This tendency is especially popular in Central Asian Republics of the former USSR. People try to find different ways to leave their home countries in order to immigrate and work abroad.

Today United States of America is the recipient country in the international labor exchange. Many citizens from the former Soviet Union republics and increasingly Central Asian countries immigrate to developed countries and particularly to the US with the intention of employment. Because US has a higher standard of living than Central Asian countries people strive to immigrate here in hope of finding jobs that would pay enough to provide for their living. Respondents mentioned that even if you are not a citizen of this country you still have more job opportunities than back home. Below are the extracts from the interviews with a labor migrants from Uzbekistan.

"It has been 15 years since I move here. Haven’t been back home since. I support all my relatives, cover the tuition for my younger brother, and regularly send money home. The one thing that I would like to mention is that everyone back home thinks that if you live in America you are a millionaire who makes tons of money. People don’t understand that it isn’t easy to live here, especially in New York. They watch Hollywood movies and build a wrong impression about life here thinking that money simply flows in your hands and all you do is have fun and go out
every day. I had the same impression before I came here, but then you quickly realize that those are just movies. New York is a high speed city where people always work. People sometimes say if you can drive in the city (Manhattan) you can drive anywhere else in the world. Interpreting this phrase I would like to say that if you survive in New York you can pretty much survive anywhere else in the world. New York is a tough place! The reason i am still here is that I am afraid of poverty if I go back home. There are no jobs there.’”

Zarina\textsuperscript{10}, 50, Uzbekistan\textsuperscript{11}

“I found a job on my second day of living in New York. I went to the neighborhood restaurant and asked them if they were hiring and they said they did. At first I was afraid that they would ask me for papers but they didn’t and I started work the next day. They paid me $70 in cash per day. The length of the working day depended on how busy it was. If it was slow I would only work seven hours, but if it was busy I worked about ten to twelve hours. The shift pay always remained the same. I now realize that they were exploiting me but hey, that was a good deal having no papers be able to find a job for a decent pay. Living in Uzbekistan and being the citizen of that country didn’t give me any job opportunities what so ever.”

Lola, 29, Uzbekistan

Talking about Marx’s capitalism the above narrative gives a great example of how American employers exploit their workers by not paying them for the extra working hours. But as it turned out from the interviews immigrants don’t mind it. They are happy to do any job for any pay.

3.1 Table: A: Frequency distribution for the reasons for migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To work and support the family back home</th>
<th>Corruption/instability</th>
<th>Unequal opportunities at home/discrimination</th>
<th>Study/practical training visit/travel</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total sample 28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{10} All names of the respondents are changed

\textsuperscript{11} All extracts from the interviews indicate the name, age and the country of origin of the respondents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To work and support the family back home</th>
<th>Corruption/instability</th>
<th>Unequal opportunities at home/discrimination</th>
<th>Study/practical training visit/travel</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total sample 100%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men 50%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women 50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: B: Percentage distribution for the reasons for migration

The data in the table above denotes that the majority of Central Asian immigrants come to the US to work in order to support the family back home. This group of immigrant account for 57% of the sample. Because of the lower standard of living and small wages they immigrate to the US with the view of employment opportunities. According to the interviews the majority of those who came to the US to work were either not happy with the wages back home or simply the lack of jobs. In some cases the decision to immigration becomes the only option. The below case confirms it.

"I am from the rural area in Kazakhstan. I used to teach children at the village school. Soon after I got pregnant and couldn't work for a year. After I came back from maternity leave (which was unpaid) my place was taken. I was trying to find a job and then finally I was hired to work in the supermarket. The salary was low but that was enough since my husband also worked. In about a year or so I found out that my husband was cheating on me, so I divorced him. He refused to pay alimony to support his child and I never insisted because I had too much pride. That was the time when one of my friends told me to immigrate to the US. I collected the
necessary documents left my son with my mother and migrated. As soon as came to New York I started working in a Russian restaurant because of my language barrier. Later I registered for English courses. I was constantly sending money to my mother who raised and educated my son.”

Nigora, 33 Kazakhstan

Another reason that forces people immigrate to the US in search of job is the high cost of living comparing to the lower wages. The majority of the respondents stated that it is possible to find jobs in their native lands but the wages are lower comparing to the prices on the market.

“I live in Brooklyn and do construction work that pays me $700 a week for five days of work. My rent is $600 since I share the apartment with my two friends. I pay $50 a month for my cell phone service, $89 for the monthly unlimited metro card. I spent about $400 a month for food. Add another $200 for other expenses. So in total my average cost of living per month is $1339. Since I earn $2800 a month that’s $1461 that I save each month. Twice a year I travel. Now I would like to compare it to my live in Kazakhstan. When I lived in Astana I did a blue collar job. My rent was $500 (which is considered a good deal) a month, I paid $55 for my cell phone service and $80 a month for the bus rides. The cost for food was about the same as I pay here – $400. Other expenses were about $150. If we calculate the total cost for living it’s about $1185. My salary was $1000 a month. That wasn’t even enough to cover the cost of my living. Forget about other things like vacations, going out and shopping! I mean, how can you survive if don’t make enough money to cover your means of subsistence.”

Diaz, 39, Kazakhstan

The study shows that there is also a group of immigrants who after getting their papers move back home and come to the US periodically only to earn money and go back home again.

“As soon as I won a Green Card I went back home. Of course, I didn’t find a job there, so I decided to go back to the US to make some money. I worked there for five months and then came back to Kyrgyzstan. Lived there for six months and then went back to the US for another five

12 Astana (former Akmola) is the capital of Kazakhstan.
months. It works out perfectly for me! Why I don't want to immigrate to the US and live here? Well, because all of my friends and relatives are in Kyrgyzstan. My parents are old and they need care. I can't just immigrate and leave them. Another reason is my mentality, I don't understand Americans, and they have different values from us, Central Asians. “

Alia, 45, Kyrgyzstan.

Corruption back home

The handbook for students traveling to the US states: don't trust anyone! Don't call black person a nigger! Never offer money to a policeman!

Another reason for immigration mentioned by the majority of the respondents is high level of corruption in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. As an outcome this leads to the instability. A large part of the sample (about 75%) indicated that they tried to open their own business in their native lands but it failed to succeed due to the enormously high taxes or corruption.

“It wasn't easy at all to start my business, but I did. I took a loan from the bank and borrowed some money from friends. The second day after I opened the restaurant two guys came in and said they need to talk to me. As you can probably guess that was mafia. They said that if I want to keep my business I have to pay them 30% of the profit. I was ready for that because that's how it works there. Once you start the business there are a lot of mouths to feed. The first one is the government that applies incredibly high taxes, the second one is the mafia, and finally the health department workers who earn very low salaries and have their families to feed. So by the end of the month everyone makes money of your business except for you.”

Azat, 50, Kyrgyzstan

“Working in Kyrgyzstan just for the salary is impossible. I worked in the hospital. I have 20 years' experience working as a doctor. The government paid me $200 a month. I have three children and wife to support. People know that doctors don't get paid well that's why a lot of
times people would come to my office to thank me for the successful surgery I did that saved lives of their close people. It is a sort of tradition when people give money in the envelope to thank doctors. I would like to stress that it is voluntarily. So on one of these visits the parents of the patient came to thank me for saving their son’s life. As soon as I took the envelope and put it my drawer three people came in to arrest me for taking the bribe. First of all that wasn’t a bribe and secondly even if it was they can’t blame me for taking it because there is no other way to survive in that country. They said they wouldn’t arrest me if I give them $1000. I ended up giving the bribe to police officer. And that’s only one example out of many that I had. One day I was just sick and tired of that and that’s how the decision to immigrated came to mind."

Baysal, 60, Kyrgyzstan

Corruption and instability is the second (25%) major reason after work that was mentioned by the respondents as the reason for immigration. Based on table 2 “Corruption Perception Index 1999-2010” I’ve calculated the average corruption perception index for these three countries. The mean corruption perception index for Kazakhstan is 2.5, for Kyrgyzstan – 2.1, for Uzbekistan – 2.1. The maximum is 10. The higher the score the less corrupted the country is, accordingly the lower the score the more corrupted the country is. Extremely high levels of corruption in Central Asian countries are another reason for the loss of population.

As an outcome of corruption there is instability. Respondents mentioned that a lot of their friends and they themselves experienced it. Because the bribing system is so developed the population of these countries is constantly pressured by the officials.

“You never know what is going to happen to you tomorrow. You go to work and there is always a chance to be fired for nothing because someone paid money to the boss to be hired. That is how it works there. You resume doesn’t matter, you work experience doesn’t have any value. When you go on a job interview there they’ll tell you right away how much this position will cost you. The price range usually depends on the monthly salary. Let’s say if the job is high paid it
will be expensive to get the job. People don’t mind buying positions because otherwise you can’t find a good job there. The system works out perfectly for employer and employee. There are two main issues though: there is a big chance you will be cheated and once you get a job they can find a reason to fire you so that the position becomes available for the next candidate who will also pay for it and will be most likely to get fired so that there is space for the next candidate. That’s how I lost my job even though I paid a lot of money to get it! Then I moved to the US.”

Aman, 44, Kazakhstan

Not surprisingly that the uncertainty about the future and extremely high level of corruption in these countries cause mass immigration of the population. As some of the interviews imply people simply don’t have money to “buy” a desired position. In the majority of cases the skills of the future employees and their experience are not important to the employer as long as they have enough money to pay him. According to the interviews with respondents the system of getting or “buying” a job looks like an endless cycle below:

3.2 Figure: Bribe cycle
The fact that one can buy a career if he has a certain amount of money has a negative influence on the quality of education. Be it a teacher or a student both “cooperate” in proceeding to a diploma which could also be easily purchased for the certain amount of money that depends on a desired major and degree. Each professor has his rates that are not flexible. As respondents indicated one doesn’t need to have a great brain to get an A on exam. As a result those who don’t have money, but study hard have lower grades than those who “buy” grades. This causes the immigration of younger population. The narrative below clearly shows how the system works.

“I went to college back home, and it was just crazy how easy it was to pass the exam and get an A without studying at all. Because professors are not paid well they take bribes to survive. Students usually know their rates and when offering money they know how much to give. Although sometimes they don’t know how much a certain professor charges and that is when funny situations take place. Me and my group mate at college tried to bribe a professor once because we hated mathematics and when handing the money the professor suddenly yelled: ‘Who do you think I am – a trader of potatoes on the market? Show some respect!’ We got really embarrassed thinking that we offered money to one of those professors who are in the minority group of those teachers who don’t accept bribes. And then she goes: ‘Go ask your friends about my rates and then come back!’ Apparently she wasn’t annoyed by the fact she was offered a bribe, but by the amount of money offered. As a result young people try to immigrate in order to study abroad. That is why I am here.”

Asel’, 30, Kazakhstan

When I asked a 43 year old Chingiz for the reason of his immigration from Kyrgyzstan he told me the following story:

“It was Saturday night and my friends and I went to the party. You know how it is. We got really drunk and picked up some girls and were heading out from the club to go one of my friends’ apartments to continue drinking. We were outside catching a cab when two policemen came up to me and said they wanted to see my ID. Well, I wasn’t aggressive or anything and showed them
my ID. Then they told me I was arrested for having drugs in my pocket. I was completely blown away! I never took drugs and moreover I know I didn’t have any that night. Then my friend started yelling at cops saying that he saw them planting the drugs on me. They didn’t listen to us and arrested both of us. As soon as we arrived to the police department they told us that would report this case to the court if we give them $1200. We tried to argue back by saying that it was them who planted the drugs on me. And you know what they said. They said: ‘Even though it was us, how are you going to prove it? Who do you think the judge will trust more: two police officers or two drunken idiots?’ I wish I had a tape recorder at that moment. Can you believe that he had enough nerve to tell me that? I tried to talk to the head of the police department, but he didn’t believe me. Why would he? If he admits I was innocent he wouldn’t get a share of $1200. It is like a chain where everyone gets a piece of cake so that all of them are satisfied therefore work as a ‘team’. The bottom line is that I ended up giving the money. It is not the only case, it also happened a lot to my friends. On the other hand, I am glad it happened to me because it pushed me to immigrate.

Chingiz, Kyrgyzstan, 43.

A lot of respondents mentioned the term “chain system” in the interviews when talking about bribes. Because as it turned out from research when it works like a chain it is extremely difficult to fight against it and as a result people leave the country. It is very common in Central Asian countries for the police officers and lawyers to use their positions to manipulate people.

Unequal opportunities at home/discrimination

According to one of the theories of discrimination individuals tend to think of other groups as minorities in order to save job positions for themselves or for the members of their group. This theory perfectly applies to the case of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan where, as the evidence from the interviews shows, the opportunities are unequal. The narrative from the interview with Anna clearly shows that:
"In 1991 the so called “race revolution” started even though people didn’t want to accept that it was a “race revolution.” Those were the times when it was dangerous be outside of your house after 8 pm, especially for girls. People saw Russian as the reason for all problems. Kazakhs thought Russians oppressed them and that’s why we [Russians] weren’t hired for good positions even though Kazakhs themselves preferred to go to a Russian doctor rather than Kazakh. That was the time when a lot of Russians left the country. Kazakhs themselves didn’t want to stay in the country that couldn’t take care of its citizens and where everything even the job positions could be bought and sold for rams\textsuperscript{13}. Since the education was bilingual Russian groups were significantly cut at the institutions of higher education. As a result Russian speaking students faced a dilemma whether be uneducated or pursue the education in Kazakh language. Some Russians enrolled in Kazakh groups and there was no indulgence to them [Russians] even though some Kazakhs didn’t speak Russian at all. There were a lot of great specialists and professors who held their PhDs who were fired because they didn’t speak Kazakh. The same thing happened in other fields. Most of the Russian speaking population was basically forced to immigrate. People had to leave their cozy houses and sell them for nothing. At that time you could purchase a two or three bedroom apartment for $500(!) Every second house had a sign: ‘For sale’. Before the ‘race revolution’ all ethnicities in Kazakhstan were very friendly to each other.”

Anna, 41, Kazakhstan

The above story reflects the opinion that as it was found from the interviews is shared with the majority of Central Asian immigrants. As a result of such situation where you either have to be a Kazakh in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan or Uzbek in Uzbekistan a lot of people lost their jobs and had lower chances of being hired if their ethnicity didn’t match their citizenship. A lot of people moved to countries of their ethnical background, and some of them moved to the US. Some respondents mentioned that at those times there was a tendency to change your last name. If you were Kazakh in Uzbekistan you could simply change the middle vowels of your

\textsuperscript{13} The phrase “buy/ sell” for rams takes its root from ancient Kazakhs who used to be nomads.
last name to make it sound Uzbek. The same thing with Uzbeks in Kazakhstan, people as the interviews show it helped other ethnicities to succeed in their Mother land. This tendency was popular because Kazakhs were more likely to be hired than Uzbeks or Kyrgyz if they were in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz and Uzbeks had better chances in the countries of their ethnic background.

“I remember when I graduated from university in Uzbekistan and went for a job interview and there were two Uzbeks and one Kazakh applying for the same position. I am ethnically Kyrgyz, I was born in Uzbekistan. Neither one of us, four had work experience besides the Kazakh guy, but they ended up hiring an Uzbek. I thought it was just me and maybe qualifications were not good enough for them, but five years later when I wanted to change my job a freshly graduated Uzbek was picked over me. First I changed my last name which worked out for me, but in a couple of year I moved to New York because I got sick and tired of this nationalism.”

Indira, 43, Uzbekistan

The passports in the Central Asian countries indicate a person’s nationality which might also be the reason for the unequal opportunities. Comparing to the US when applying for job in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan individuals are required to indicate their nationality. There are a lot of different ethnicities who were born and raised in Central Asia, therefore there is a place for discrimination not as radical as in France, but still. The fact that citizens of these countries are required to indicate their nationality creates a strong bias.

There was another case of immigration due to the discrimination that I encountered while my research. It was a woman from Kyrgyzstan who immigrated due to her religious beliefs that were criticized by her friends and relatives. The below narrative describes her story in more detail.
"I am an Uzbek who was born in Kyrgyzstan. My parents are Muslim and fifteen years ago I believed in Islam. In 1995 I faced a lot of difficulties in my life. My son got sick and my husband suffered heavy injuries in the accident that made him disabled. I spent months in hospital taking care of my boys. My child had some unknown disease that day by day made him blind. The doctors couldn't find the cure. Meanwhile my husband was still in the hospital going through different therapies. That was the time when I prayed every day and every minute to Allah to help people who are close to me. Although things weren't getting any better I prayed day and night. One day my neighbor, who was Jewish, offered me to go on a mass with him. I did and in a couple of months I converted to Judaism. I went to church every day and prayed to God. I believe that because I converted to Judaism helped my son and my husband to recover. When my relatives found out about that they stopped coming to my house and talking to me. They judged me for changing my religious views and said that it is a shame to do that. My children were ashamed of me and my husband didn't talk to me. I then divorced my husband and moved to Uzbekistan. There I didn't feel as much pressured but still didn't have a lot of friends. Muslim world didn't accept me and I immigrated to the US."

Aynur, 55, Kyrgyzstan

As you can see from this interview the reason for immigration was the discrimination of the religious minorities. And that is not the only case when people immigrate to the US due to their religious beliefs. Lola told me there are a lot of people who she personally knows had immigrated to the US due to their religious views. Since my study is not about immigration of religious minorities from Central Asia to the US I didn't include a lot of them in my sample in order to avoid extreme results.

There was one case in my sample when the respondent refused to be interviewed in live. Lola was the one who introduced me to him over the phone. I didn't pressure him to for a live interview since I wanted him to feel comfortable during our conversation in order to hear true
responses. So I found a solution and offered him to be interviewed by Skype\textsuperscript{14}. He agreed on that condition and arranged date and time. When I asked him the reason why he didn’t want me to see him he told me the following story:

"It took me a lot of effort to run away from the country where my entire life I was oppressed for my sexual orientation. Yes, I am gay and I am not ashamed to say that and I never was that is why Soviet mentality didn’t accept me. You know, how soviet people are: they are always afraid to express their thoughts and there is always a fear of something. Looking back now I still remember the day when I finally couldn’t take it anymore and decided to immigrate to this beautiful and free country. It was in summer of 1994 when woke up from the noise outside. I looked out of my window and saw a bunch of my neighbors throwing stones at my gate. They screamed: ‘Get out from this neighborhood, fag! You are shame for us and a bad example for our children!’ I was afraid to leave my house because I thought they would kill me. I had to leave my house at night and what is worse I couldn’t ask my relatives for help because they hated me. I am so happy I am in a better place now."

Andrey, 38, Kazakhstan

Now increasingly a new type of oppression occurs very often. Since most of the respondents in my sample have been living in the US for eight or more years there were very few of those who arrived recently. Due to the interethnic bloody riots between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, a city called Osh the situation there still remain tense. The constant fights between two ethnical groups that were very friendly before caused a mass immigration of Uzbeks. Two respondents from Kyrgyzstan were ethnical Uzbeks who left the country in sake of safety of their families. Here is an extract from one of these interviews.

"I’ve been living in Kyrgyzstan for my entire life. We never had any problems with Kyrgyz, they are our brothers and sisters. I forced to leave Kyrgyzstan because what was happening there is

\textsuperscript{14}Skype is a software application that allows users to make voice calls and chats over the Internet.
Armored vehicles drive on the streets firing the houses of Uzbeks in Osh. Hundreds of people were killed, their corpses lied on the streets, women were raped and men were beaten to death. The Government remains silent, its actions are ineffective. All the restaurants, shops, department stores owned by Uzbeks were destroyed. They walked around with weapons while we didn't have any, in other words no way to defend our families. We had to evacuate because there was a real threat to our lives. We stayed in the field for a couple of days with other refugees. Thank to Red Cross we didn't die of hunger. Then we crossed the border of Uzbekistan and after that immigrated to the US. Because of these horrible events a lot of Uzbeks are leaving Kyrgyzstan and immigrating to the US.”

Alisher, 30, Kyrgyzstan

According to the interviews discrimination played a significant role in making decision to immigrate and this totally makes sense. An individual can’t be happy in a place where he is discriminated or oppressed. Those respondents who were discriminated back home saw immigration as the way to freedom.

How they came to the US?

While reading these interviews one might think how these people immigrated to the US. As it turned out there were a lot of different ways used my respondents to immigrate.

3.3 Table: How respondents came to the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrived to the US through</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourist visa</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Card Lottery</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Visa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

15 Osh (Kyrgyz: Ouu) is the second largest city in Kyrgyzstan, located in the Fergana Valley in the south of the country and often referred to as the "capital of the south".
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>10.7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the frequency distribution above implies the majority (53.57%) of respondents arrived to the US on a tourist visa. Most of the immigrants who came to the US on a tourist visa mentioned that it is not an easy process and it requires a lot of time and effort and of course significant financial costs. As it turned out there are a lot of tourist agencies that “help” people immigrate to the US. Respondents noted that these formal institutions charge anywhere from $2500 to $7000 to assist you in your immigration. The cost depends on multiple factors such as for instance: two ways airplane ticket, providing the traveler with the fake bank account information\(^\text{16}\), filling up all necessary documents that are required for getting the visa, training before the interview in the US embassy, meeting the immigrant at the airport upon his arrival to the US, assistance in finding a job and place to live when he is in the US. While the promises the agencies make in order to charge as much money as possible sound promising, in real life they don’t fulfill even the half of what they get paid for. These agencies take advantage of the fact that most of the travelers don’t speak English and charge them unreasonably high fees for simply filling out their basic information for visa application. As it turned out these agencies are hooked up with the bank employees who in turn provide them [agencies] with the fictive bank documents. Agencies in turn pay them some share for their “services”. As for training before the interview it appeared to be in the highest customer demand. One would think what is there to prepare for when going to an interview to the embassy. It appears that there are a lot of factors that a traveler needs to

\(^\text{16}\) When traveling to the US on a tourist or student visa US embassy requires the visitor to present a bank account that has a certain amount of money on it that depends on how long the traveler plans to stay in the US.
know before talking to an ambassador. Because a lot of documents presented at the embassy are fictive a traveler is better off memorizing all necessary information before going on the interview.

The majority of the respondents who paid these so called “traveling agencies” money for the listed above services never received it upon arrival. Sanjar is one of them:

“I signed the contract with the agency and they assured me that upon arrival to New York their college will meet me at JFK and then help me to find a place to live. They even gave me a phone number of that, as I found out later “nonexistent person”. As soon as my airplane landed I called that number and a female voice answered me in unknown language. At that moment I understood that I was fooled.”

Sanjar, 29 Uzbekistan

Another type of scam that, as respondents marked, appeared to be very popular is charging money for the application for a dvlottery\(^\text{17}\). This application is free, but unfortunately people realize that when it’s too late. The 21.43% of those who came to the US through the Green Card applied for the lottery either themselves or asked their relatives and friends in the US to apply for them.

The primary purpose of the 14.3 % from the interviewed sample was to study in the US. The closer analysis showed that their goal to pursue higher education in half of the cases was changed by the aim of getting the papers. Two out four respondents who came to the US to study dropped out from college after the first year. This fact questions whether people come here not to study but to work or whether they come here to study but because the tuition and living in New York is expensive they drop out. Well, this is agenda for the future research.

\(^{17}\)The Diversity Immigrant Visa program is a United States congressionally-mandated lottery program for receiving a United States Permanent Resident Card. It is also known as the Green Card Lottery.
Other ways of arriving to the US account for 10.7% and among them are: obtaining the status of a refugee, marriage to an American citizen, cultural exchange program. Those as it turned out account for the minority of cases.

**Why New York?**

3.4 Table: Distribution of International Migrants by Region, 1990 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Europe and Former Soviet Union</th>
<th>20.9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table above indicates that in 1990 20% of the international migrants were in North America.

New York’s share accounts for the majority of immigrant flows in the US. Day by day New York becomes the home for the growing amounts of immigrants from Central Asia since it has more employment opportunities and a high standard of living comparing not only to Central Asian countries but also to the rest of America excluding such megacities as Los Angeles, Miami, San Francisco and Washington. The basic reason for such a huge flow of immigrants to New York is the weak state system of regulation of migration processes. As most of the respondents indicated the most important is to get visa here and once you are here you can easily mix up with the rest of the population and no one would care if you are an illegal immigrant or a legal resident. As a result, large numbers of immigrants work in New York illegally. They don’t pay taxes, have no health insurance, and are not able to travel. And taking all that into account the
ease with which you can find a job in New York astonishes. Not only it appeared to be easier to find a job in New York comparing to other states, but the pay is also better according to the respondents who came here from other states. About a half of the sample mentioned that they arrived directly to New York from their home countries. Another half of the sample first settled in other regions of this country and then came to New York. The reasons appeared to be different. Some respondents picked New York for its “don’t care” spirit, some had friends in New York who helped them to settle down, some followed their loved ones who moved to New York, and others simply liked its climate because it is almost identical to the climate of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The prevailing reason for picking New York appeared to be its employment opportunities.

“I lived in Orlando, Florida for a year, worked in a pizzeria for seven dollars an hour. It was definitely enough to live in Orlando because the rent is cheap, but I also wanted to save money and send them home and my salary simply didn’t cover my needs. Then I moved to New York and found the job at the construction company. I’ve been doing this for eight years now and I am happy because it pays me really good money. I also helped my friends who lived in Pittsburg, Philadelphia to move here because there no jobs there. The next day after they relocated to New York they both found a job. I think different people choose to live in New York for different reasons, I love big cities and its endless noise, and others don’t.”

Bahrom, 36, Uzbekistan

In majority of cases respondents that New York attracted them for its freedom, especially in the case of sexual minorities.

“I have a boyfriend now and we can’t wait to adopt a child. I mean how great it is that men like me can freely express who they are without being afraid of insults and ridicules. We go out to the

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18 When respondents were asked to name the spirit of New York most of them said: “freedom, not caring about anything besides your own business.”
movies and hold our hands and kiss on public and no one cares. It is normal here, but not in the other states of this country. We’ve been there and saw the way people were staring at us. New York is not America; it is one of a kind! I am so happy I have this wonderful chance to have a free life here.”

Andrey, 38 Kazakhtsan

Another factor that gives New York a huge advantage over the rest of the US is its diversity. Since American Culture is totally different from Central Asian immigrants from these countries are highly attracted to the variety New York offers. This variety includes ethnicities, neighborhoods, languages and food. Below is the extract that shows how an immigrant from Kyrgyzstan feels about New York.

‘I immigrated to the US from Kyrgyzstan twenty five years ago because during my entire life I had a burning desire to leave the Soviet Union. I was alien to the ideas of socialism, communism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. I applied to the American embassy in order to immigrate to the US as a refugee. In three years I finally got a response that I was given the refugee status and therefore there were no barriers to immigrate. Immigration to the US had a lot of positive impacts on my life. I learned another language, new culture, I have an opportunity to see people from all over the world. I am now familiar with Mexican, Italian, Turkish, Japanese, Indian, and Chinese cuisines. I mean, where else in the world you have this amazing chance to hear ten different languages while riding on the train and that is in one (!) car. That is why upon the arrival to the US I decided to live in New York.’

Nurzhan, 45 Kyrgyzstan

Where do they live and do they have their neighborhoods?

I selected the New York metropolitan area as a field research site for the two main reasons. The first and the biggest motive is the fact that the Brighton Beach neighborhood that is located in Brooklyn, New York is the home for the biggest Russian-speaking population in the US.
Immigrants from the former Soviet Union republics mostly settle in Brighton Beach, Sheepshead Bay and Kings Highway areas because in these neighborhoods they can “interact with numerous neighbors and acquaintances, shop at a great variety of stores, see a doctor, receive various services, watch cable TV or listen the radio, all without using a word in English” (Vinokurov, Birman, and Trickett 2000, 542). The second reason is that I, myself and most of my social ties that mainly consist of Central Asian immigrants reside in Brooklyn, New York which made it easier to set up the time and place for the interviews. I have also made several trips to Rego Park and Forest Hills in Queens because as I found out from the respondents there are big communities of Central Asians in these areas of Queens.

3.5 Table: Where do immigrants live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of residence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brighton Beach + Coney Island</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheepshead Bay</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck Road + Avenue U</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Highway</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rego Park + Forest Hills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bensonhurst</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N)</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the study shows there is no specific area in New York where only Central Asians live. The research results indicate that because Central Asians are still the minority group comparing to other ethnic groups residing in New York they don’t have the specific area in New York which can be compared to Russian “Brighton Beach”, Chinese “China Town”, or Italian “little
Italy”. Even though Central Asians don’t have their distinct neighborhood in New York huge clusters of their population are mostly located in Sheepshead Bay, Bensonhurst, Brighton Beach, Kings Highway and Neck Road. It was found from the interviews that a good number of Central Asians reside in Rego Park, Queens. The fact that the above areas of New York are filled with restaurants owned by former citizens of Central Asia serves as a good evidence of the places of residence.

Brighton beach feels like a different world from the carnival atmosphere of its famous neighbor, Coney Island. Though it shares the southern cost of Brooklyn with Coney Island, Brighton Beach is a world apart from the amusement rides of its famous neighbor to the west. Here, in one of the rare New York neighborhoods where residents can actually access the waterfront, Russian cafes serve customers on the boardwalk, and locals of all ages engage in animated conversation while enjoying the sea breeze. Increasingly now these Russian restaurants compete with the growing number of Central Asian restaurants and cafes appearing in the same areas of New York. Most of the respondents indicated that the situation wasn’t like that ten or twenty years ago. They call it a new phenomenon that mostly started taking place about seven – eight years ago.

Sheepshead Bay is a bay that separates the mainland of Brooklyn from the Eastern portion of Coney Island. It is a neighbor of Manhattan Beach to the East and Sea Gate to the West. As it was found from the study a lot of Kyrgyz and Uzbek immigrants reside in this area of New York due to the location of supermarkets that sell products that immigrants used to buy when they were back home. Another reason why Sheepshead Bay attracts Central Asians is the Emmons Avenue - that is the northern shoreline street along the bay and it is filled with restaurants and
bars that serve fresh seafood. Kings Highway is a broad avenue in the southern part of the New York City borough of Brooklyn. A lot of respondents mentioned that the reason they live in Kings Highway is the fact that there are a lot of shopping centers, malls, banks, schools located in that area which doesn’t require long trips on the subway. Moreover, employees in all of these establishments are Russian speaking which makes it much easier for those who don’t speak English. The below narrative shows that one doesn’t need to know English to live in Kings Highway.

“When I moved here I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to do simple things like shopping or paying bills without speaking English. But all these fears vanished when I went to the bank on Kings Highway to open an account. The assistant was Russian speaking and therefore I had no problems. Here you can go to any public place and employees will gladly assist you in Russian. You don’t face the language barrier here.”

Shahlo, 35 Uzbekistan

Another area of New York that as it turned out from the study is the home for a lot of Central Asian immigrants is Bensonhurst that is located in the south-western part of Brooklyn, New York. 14.29% of the sample indicated Bensonhurst as the place of their residence. Rego Park which is located in the borough of Queens borders to the north with Elmhurst and Corona, to the east and south with Forest Hills and to the west with Middle Village. In the past fifteen years the Forest Hills and Rego Park area has had a large influx of immigrants from Central Asia.

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19 The west end is at Bay Parkway and 78th street. East of Ocean Avenue the street becomes mostly residential, tending generally east, then northeast, then north through Brooklyn and ending at East 98th Street in central Brooklyn.

20 It is the neighborhood of Brooklyn that in the early 1900s was considered as Brooklyn’s “Little Italy”. Now an influx of former Soviet Union immigrants who have opened many restaurants and shops along 18th Avenue, Bay Parkway and 86th Street made it a “Little Soviet Union” neighborhood.

21 Immigrant populations from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are well represented in Rego Park which can be proved by the presence of a large amount of restaurants serving Kyrgyz and Uzbek national dishes.
Both of these areas account for the 14.29% of the sample. All of these places share a special quality: they are the home for the immigrants from Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. They are known for their high concentration of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The signage of many buildings and stores are bilingual: Russian and English.

How many Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks are there in New York?

Unfortunately there is no precise data on the amount of immigrants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan residing in New York. The issue here is that a lot of them are illegal immigrants who come to the US on different type of visas and then simply overstay. As Darhan Nurmagambet - the president of Kazakh American Association reports there is no precise information on the amount of Kazakhs in the US, but according to the preliminary data there are about 40 thousand Kazakhs living in the US. According to the data from Kyrgyz American Society22 there are about 10 thousand Kyrgyz who currently live in the United States. In order to have at least a rough idea about the numbers of immigrants currently living in the US I use different data sources in my research.

According to the U.S. Census in 2000 1000 people marked their nationality as Kazakhs, 6000 said they were Kyrgyz and 4842 persons indicated their nationality as Uzbek.

I created the tables below based on the information from the data on U.S. Department of State website23 on the frequency of Green Card Lottery winnings by country.


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22 Based mainly in New York, the organization also has contingents in Chicago, Cincinnati and Philadelphia. The society was founded in April 2009, and now has close to 1,000 members.

23 http://www.dvlottery.state.gov/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>1026</td>
<td>1497</td>
<td>1192</td>
<td>1819</td>
<td>1551</td>
<td>1346</td>
<td>1536</td>
<td>3101</td>
<td>3284</td>
<td>4059</td>
<td>5091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>2086</td>
<td>2286</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>2476</td>
<td>2053</td>
<td>1722</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>3585</td>
<td>3789</td>
<td>4607</td>
<td>5657</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B: Table: Percentage of Green Card Lottery winnings from 2000 – 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.03</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N) %</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: Table: Total number of people who won Green Card Lottery from 2000 - 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>5196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>2114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>26466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>33776</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the numbers in the table above indicate there are 33776 people who arrived to the US from these countries during the twelve year period on a Green Card Lottery. Even though there is no data on where those people settled upon their arrival we can make an assumption that most of them settled in New York because the latter is the city with the largest Russian speaking population. Taking into account that a lot of people arriving on a Green Card don’t speak English
this might be the right assumption. The table indicates an amazingly huge gap between the amount of Uzbeks winning Green Cards and Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Uzbeks account for 75% of the issued Green Card Lotteries which makes me think why there is such a huge distinction. This is agenda for the future research.

The significant place in the spectrum of ethnic diversity of the American society is occupied by people from the former Soviet Union. Today there are various ethnic Diasporas of those Soviet immigrants residing in NY. Among these major ethnic groups are Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek Diasporas. How are they formed? How do they interact with their historic homeland? What happens to the representatives of these three Central Asian Republics in New York diversity? According to the president of the association who is also its founder these people are mostly the representatives of the large, third wave of immigrants the origin of which starts at the period of "perestroika"\textsuperscript{24} At that time Kazakhstan’s borders were open and people could freely immigrate in search of a better life. As Darhan Nurmagambet reports there were three waves of immigration of Kazakhs to the US: first, post-revolutionary emigration was primarily aquatic, that’s when dispossession started. People immigrated to Afghanistan, Turkey, then to France and Germany and a few of them to the US. The second wave of immigrants as Mr. Nurmagambet states refers to the after World War II period. After the war - many were forced to leave the United States.

How immigrants adapt in NY

What happens to their culture in the US, do they become Americanized?

\textsuperscript{24} Literally: “Reconstruction” was a political movement within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during 1980s, widely associated with the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Its literal meaning is "restructuring", referring to the restructuring of the Soviet political and economic system.
It was found from the study that Central Asian immigrants try not to lose their culture upon the arrival to the US. They especially unite during the hard times in history of their native lands. A great example is Kyrgyzstan. Due to the unrest in Kyrgyzstan Kyrgyz Club arranged a fundraising event that collected money from Kyrgyz citizens in the US. It is amazing how immigrants unite in order to help their compatriots. I found from the interviews that when immigrants realize they are the small community in a foreign land they try to stick together and help each other. When I asked all Kyrgyz respondents in my sample whether they took part in the fundraising event 95% said they donated $100 each. The rest 5% simply didn’t know there was a fundraising event or couldn’t attend it.

As a result of growing numbers of Central Asian immigrants moving to New York and USA in general different nonprofit organizations are established. These institutions cooperate with their embassies and organize the celebrations of the national holidays, arrange parties where the showmen are invited from their homelands. These associations also organize classes that teach Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek languages. Among such organizations are: Kazakh American Association (mentioned earlier), Kyrgyz-American Society, Kyrgyz Club25, Uzbek American Association. These organizations emerge as the result of the growing amount of Central Asians immigrants moving the US. The role of these organizations in uniting the immigrants from Central Asia is tremendous. Throughout the year they arrange various social events such as celebrating the national holidays, one of them is “Nowruz”26. Kyrgyz American society member in New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia has their soccer teams. They gathered in

25 Kyrgyz Club is a nonprofit organization of Kyrgyz Community in the USA established by initiative group of young professionals in May 2005 in New York City.
26 Nowruz marks the first day of spring and the beginning of the year in Iranian calendar. It is celebrated and observed by Iranian peoples and the related cultural continent and has spread in many other parts of the world, including parts of Central Asia, South Asia, Northwestern China, the Crimea and some groups in the Balkans.
May 2010 for a soccer competition. Such events are significant factors that positively influence immigrants' lives and make them relax from their jobs. This is just a couple of examples showing how crucial these organizations are in bringing together the immigrants from these countries. The major goal of these organizations is providing any sort of aid to the recently arrived immigrants and those who have been living here for a while, assisting them in solving the problems concerning their [immigrants'] adaptation in America that involves the guidance in finding a job.

The fact that Central Asian immigrants try to keep close to their culture and countrymen when living here is well supported by the evidence from the interviews. According to the majority (80%) of the respondents who got married while living in the US they either went back home to find their future spouse or married their countrymen here. Very few of them (20%) have a spouse from the different ethnicity.

"I came here when I was young. I won a Green Card. I worked for a while and then I realized it was time to get married. From the very beginning I knew I will go back home to find a wife because we Central Asian have a different culture and different mentality. I never wanted to marry an American girl because they have different priorities and it just wouldn't work out. I know some of my friends who married American girls are divorced now. Even though it depends on the person, when it comes to marriage the culture matters."

Zohid, 39 Uzbekistan

It was also found that Central Asian women are more likely to marry different ethnicities while Central Asian men on the other hand are very less likely to do the same. Of those 20% of the sample who married different ethnicities were only Central Asian women.

44
When it comes to friends Central Asians like to keep close to their countrymen.

3.7 Table: Of your four closest friends how many are from the same country as you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of friends</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.8 Table: How often do you celebrate your national holidays?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that 75% of the respondents regularly celebrate their national holidays means that upon the arrival to the US the vast majority of Central Asian immigrants don't lose their identities, but instead try to keep to their culture even closer than before.

"Last year on 'Nowruz' we all gather for a banquet party with our countrymen from Kyrgyzstan. It took place in the restaurant. There was a contest for the best national costume. We were required to wear national outfits. We had a great time there! Speaking the same native language
and celebrating one of our biggest national holidays with my countrymen gave me the feeling of warmth in a foreign country. We have a lot of national holidays that we celebrate together such as the independence day of Kyrgyzstan, for instance. This year we celebrated New Year’s Eve together. By the way you should come to celebrate ‘Nowruz’ with us next year.”

Ayman, 27 Kyrgyzstan

And I did……..

I thought it would be a great opportunity to see how immigrants socialize. The event took place in the restaurant that was located on Brighton Beach. As soon as I entered the place I was amazed with its décor. The food that was served there was all from Central Asian cuisine which made me realize how tight immigrants are to their culture and cuisine even when living in totally different world. The performers from Kyrgyzstan were invited. I myself felt like I was attending an event back home. The toastmaster was bilingual and made jokes both in Kyrgyz and Russian languages. All guests were dressed up. These elegant ladies in splendid dresses wearing expensive perfumes, diamonds and perfect make up that covers the dark circles under their eyes are housemaids, babysitters or home attendants. As for gentlemen in tuxedos they are not as lucky as ladies because not only they cannot wear make up to cover the fatigue on their faces, moreover they can’t use nail polish that would hide lime under their fingernails which was probably washed in a rush for the party. At least tuxedos can cover back pain belts that as it turned out27 are pretty common among Central Asian male migrants due to the heavy construction work they do upon the arrival to the US. This is the flip side of the coin when living in the foreign land.

27 Even though this was not one of the research questions in the study, but according to the interviews 80% of the male migrants use back pain belts due to the heavy construction work.
What types of jobs they do?

3.9 Table: Types of jobs for women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home attendant</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babysitter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical office</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N)</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study shows that most of the women the occupation of most of the women in the sample is taking care of elderly citizens. When I asked some of them why they chose that job they said that it pays well, gives you benefits and is the most available for immigrants. Childcare turned out to be the second most popular job type among immigrant women. It’s remarkable that mostly older women were involved in childcare and taking care of elderly while mostly younger women were cashiers, waitresses, or pharmacists. When interviewing women I asked them why there was such a distinction in the type of jobs. Most of them said that it has to with the language barrier. It turned out from the research it was more younger than older people who spoke English. Therefore certain types of jobs weren’t available for those who didn’t speak English. Another factor that caused such a distinction was the fact that parents were more likely to hire older women to take care of their children due to the experience of the latter with their own children.

"When my girlfriend told me there was job of a babysitter available I sent my niece who at that time was 23 for an interview. When I found out she was rejected I went for an interview myself
and was hired. Then I asked my employer why she refused to hire my niece on which she answered that the latter was too young and had no experience with children."

Zhanar, 56, Kyrgyzstan

3.10 Table: Types of jobs for men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction worker</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakery worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe maker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquor store owner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car wash</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N)</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that most of the immigrant men tend to be employed on construction sites while the rest of them spread in different fields. As immigrants talk about the periods of time when they were looking for jobs they all agree on one point, i.e. construction job is the best paid job for male immigrants and can be easily found either through acquaintances or adds in the newspaper. Only one of the male respondents owned his business. From the interview with him it was clear that usually it’s those immigrants who had been living in this country for a while own their businesses while the others do construction, moving and etc.

“I came here from Kazakhstan twenty five years ago. I remember that I went through different kinds of low paid jobs before I started my business. It’s not that simple to open something, it’s quite expensive and that’s why most of the immigrants can’t own the business as soon as they immigrate unless they come here with money which happens very rarely. Besides you need a good credit history to borrow money from the bank and that takes time. That is why you don’t
see a lot of immigrants doing a low paid job. They need time to adjust to life here and save money in order to have stability."

Baurzhan, 60, Kazakhstan

Now we know that caregivers are not only Latino women but also women from Central Asian countries with the only difference that the latter group mostly works in Brooklyn due to the language barrier. We also know that when passing by the construction site a Chinese looking man working there is not necessarily Chinese. He might be an immigrant from Central Asia. The results show that the majority of immigrants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan regardless of their level of education are either constructors or home attendants\(^2\).

About 80% of the respondents in the sample are educated professionals in various fields. Back home they used to be doctors, teachers, lawyers, business owners, accountants, in other words 80% of the sample used to do blue collar job before coming to the US. Those respondents indicated that being constructors and home attendants here in the US they make more money than when they used to do blue collar job.

**What problems do they face?**

Research shows that the process of adaptation in a new country is always accompanied by various issues that immigrants face while in the new land. I made a questionnaire that helped me to determine which issues were faced the most by immigrants and which were faced to a lesser extent. The table below sorts the problems the immigrants encountered in New York in the range starting from the most commonly faced to the least generally faced.

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28 Care of elderly, convalescent, or handicapped persons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues faced</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language barrier</td>
<td>25 out of 28</td>
<td>90% out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job</td>
<td>23 out of 28</td>
<td>82% out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low living conditions</td>
<td>20 out of 28</td>
<td>72% out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffordable healthcare</td>
<td>18 out of 28</td>
<td>64% out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural shock</td>
<td>15 out of 28</td>
<td>54% out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal status</td>
<td>11 out of 28</td>
<td>39% out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>10 out of 28</td>
<td>36% out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding friends</td>
<td>10 out of 28</td>
<td>36% out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above demonstrates that language barrier appeared to be the biggest obstacle that was confronted by the most (90%) respondents. The immigrants told that the reason the language barrier was the biggest difficulty they faced while in the US is because it leads to all other issues listed in the above table. Munisa, 39 from Uzbekistan tells the following story.

"I used to be a pediatrician back in Uzbekistan. When I moved here with my family I wanted to get the license to work as a doctor here. In order to get the license I needed to pass certain exams which were in English. I didn’t speak English and didn’t have time to learn it because we had just arrived to a totally unknown place and desperately needed to find a job. It left me no choice except for doing a low wage job. Because I don’t speak English I do a low wage job and receive little salary that is not enough to rent a nice apartment and cover a medical insurance. Because I receive a little salary I have to work more hours. I don’t have time to go out and make friends. I have a goal to master the language in a year and pass the exams to be a doctor here. It won’t be easy to accomplish it because I work hard and have two school age children to take care of, but I’ll achieve it no matter what!"

Munisa, 39 Uzbekistan
Racism was among the problems immigrants faced. Some respondents mentioned that because of 9/11 attacks they experienced the discrimination due to their religious beliefs\textsuperscript{29}. The interviewed also mentioned that 9/11 caused the barrier when their relatives or friends intended to visit them in the US.

"In 2003 I invited by brother to visit me. He had never been here previously. He went for an interview and an American council refused to issue him a visa. When I talked to him on the phone he was furious because as he told me later there were three Russian guys who spoke to the same council as he did and got approval."

Aman, 44 Kazakhstan

This tendency seems to be quite similar here in the US. One of the interviewed mentioned that after 9/11 attacks people increasingly ask them questions like: "Do you wear veil in Uzbekistan?" or "How many times a day you pray?" or "Are you the same Muslim as Arabs?"

One Kazakh respondent remembered the situation when he went for a drink to the bar with his Uzbek friend and the latter got in a fight with a guy who called him a terrorist because of his black hair and eyebrows and dark big eyes. An immigrant from Uzbekistan told that her husband was denied American visa because there was an expired Saudi Arabian visa in his passport that he was issued when he traveled to Dubai five years ago. The majority of the respondents said that things had significantly changed in New York City after the 9/11 bombings. The narratives below indicate how respondents feel about the cause of 9/11 attacks.

"My friend told me a real story that happened to him two years ago. First I didn’t believe him, but then I realized he was telling the truth. He was talking to his cousin who lives in Kyrgyzstan through Skype. The started discussing politics and who might be in charge of 9/11 constantly

\textsuperscript{29} The major religion of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan is Islam.
repeating the word ‘terrorist’. An hour later people in special uniforms knocked on his door and took him away. He went through interrogation and was asked questions like: ‘Why did you talk about terrorists with someone from another country?’ ‘Who is the person you talked to?’ ‘Have you ever been involved in any criminal activities?’ ‘What are your religious beliefs?’ He was released the same day after it turned out he wasn’t a terrorist. After what happened to him I am always restricted when talking to my family on the phone or Skype because they can arrest me for no reason.”

Nurzhan, 45 Kyrgyzstan

About half of the sample mentioned that after September, 11 they are very careful when doing international phone calls. Respondents expressed the dissatisfaction with the fact that phone conversations are tapped by government. According to the interviews another change that took place after 9/11 is the fact that people need to sign or have an ID in in order to walk in to the nearly every building in New York. The most annoying outcome of September, 11 attacks as respondents state is the sign in New York Subway saying that all large bags are subject of a random police check.

“The other day a policeman stopped me on subway and said he needs to see what was in my bag. I was going back home from gym. He didn’t stop other people with huge bags. After 9/11 the racism became stronger which directly affects us – brown skinned, dark haired Central Asians.”

Zohid, 39 Uzbekistan

Among the issues immigrants face here is the process of Americanization of their children. Respondents shared that it is hard to teach the native language to their children because as soon as they leave the house they speak English. The short answers demonstrate the opinions of immigrant parents on to the question: “Is your child Americanized? If yes - why?”
“She prefers burger and fries to Uzbek pilaf.”

“He moved out from the house as soon as he turned 18.”

“He doesn’t speak the native language.”

“She doesn’t see family as a priority in life.”

“He doesn’t know Kyrgyz national traditions.”

“She doesn’t let anyone yell at her saying no one has a right to do so because it is a free country.”

In general about fifty percent of immigrant parents said their children became Americanized. Some of them saw it as something inevitable while others said that they managed to control this process and as a result their children speak the native language and observe their national customs.

When I asked respondents what they like the most about the US sixty percent said freedom. Another twenty percent said they are attracted to money. The rest ten percent named various reasons such as the ability to travel, try different food, provide better opportunities for their children, and the chance to live in highly civilized society.

“You are free here. I wake up in the morning and go to buy some milk in my pajamas. I could never do this back home.”

“I have only been here for seven years and have already bought a huge house back home and two cars. The money is great here!”

Research showed that all (!) of the interviewed respondents send remittances to their home countries. The only distinction appeared to be in the amount of money sent and the frequency of money transfers. About a half of respondents send remittances on a regular basis, i. e. once a month, a little less than a quarter of the sample does it once in three months and the rest of the

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30 Pilaf is a dish in which rice is cooked in a seasoned broth, is usually served with lamb.
sample sends money as the latter is needed which happens on a regular basis due to the bad economic situation in Central Asia.

When it came to the question what they dislike about living here eighty percent said constant work, thirteen percent said the lack of soul in a big city that makes a person feel lonely and the remaining seven percent named different reasons like homesickness, weather, food, and racism.

"I literally work every day, there is no time to hang out with my friends and family. Because New York is so expensive you have to work almost twenty four seven in order to provide for your family."

"I think the city lacks the soul. It seems so beautiful with all its lights, but people seem lonely."

Respondents' intentions to move back home decrease the longer they stay in the US.

After all the questions that I've asked the immigrants I was curious to examine their intentions to go back to their countries of origin. It was found in the study that the desire or unwillingness of the immigrants to go back home strongly depends on the amount of years lived in the US. I distributed the data into three tables that are presented below.

3.12 Table: A: 1-10 years lived in the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY (f)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY WANT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANT</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT REALLY</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL (N)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>99.99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: B: 11-20 years lived in the US
Table: C: 21 and over years lived in the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>FREQUENCY (f)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY WANT</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT REALLY</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT AT ALL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL (N)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.12 A, which shows the level of intention to move back home for the respondents who have been living in the US from one to ten years, reveals four distinctive patterns. The table shows remarkable variations among groups. Although 41.66% of the sample didn’t want to move back to their country of origin to any extent, the figure suggests that the remaining proportion of the sample intended to migrate back home some with higher lever, some with the lower. Those who wanted to go back home at the highest extent account for 25% of the sample while those who wanted to go back home at the second highest level constituted 33.33% of the sample which is also the majority.

Comparing table 3.12 B to the previous table we notice the variations within categories. We can clearly see that none of those respondents who had been living in the US from ten to twenty
years marked “strongly want” category, the less amount of that group said they “wanted” to move back home in contrast with the first table. Accordingly the larger part of the sample indicated they intended to stay in the US, that part account for 70% of the sample. The lower level of intention to move back home may be explained my several factors such as obtaining papers to be able to legally work and reside in country as well as getting benefits from the government, owning the property in the territory of US, having school-age children who became Americanized and resist moving to the totally unknown country for them. Other aspects for this phenomenon are the change in peoples’ mentality and way of thinking. The narrative above clearly shows what is implied here.

“I was so excited to go home for the first time in so many years. By that time it had been about fifteen years that I hadn’t been home. On my second day at home I decided I had enough rest and called my friends to meet up. We went to an outdoor café for some drinks and snacks. It was nice and warm outside so I figured it would be comfortable to wear flip flops and light jeans with the top that has a symbol of my favorite team-Yankees. I grabbed my back pack and left the house. When I got to the place my friends were already there waiting for me. We were very happy to see each other, but I was really disappointed by the way people stared at me. They were whispering to each other about the way I was dressed and they weren’t even hiding it! I then asked my friends (who probably also thought I was dressed inappropriately) why everyone was gazing at me like I was a clown or something. They explained me that people there always dress up when they go out be it a corner deli or a fancy restaurant. And that was true when I looked around I noticed that everyone was dressed up and looked like they had an appointment to the Queen Elizabeth II. At that moment I realized how different and Americanized I became. I had a different opinion on a lot of things that people were blown away by. It is the clash of this unique American spirit of freedom with the Central Asian mentality that made me feel alienated at the place where I was born.”

Aigerim, 42, Kazakhstan
The results in table 3.12 C reveal substantial differences in intentions to move back home between those who have been living here for ten to twenty years and those who have residents of this country for over twenty years. The latter group of respondents expressed a big intention to move back to their Mother lands. The “want” category responses accounted for 50% of the sample who have been living here for over twenty years. The higher intention to move back home of those who have been living here for over twenty years may be related to the period of the respondents’ lives when they become retired and don’t have to work anymore. As it was found most of the respondent from table 3C intentionally stayed in the US till they get retired.

Why? - For obvious reasons. Above is the extract from one of the interviews that demonstrates why most of the older respondents wish to return to the country of their origin.

“I came to the US twenty five years ago. I had to through a lot of difficulties in order to obtain papers and a get a job. By the time I have accomplished all that my children were 10 and 12 years old. I worked double shifts to provide for my family and intentionally worked on the books even though I was offered other jobs that were willing to pay me cash. I refused to work for cash because I needed the health insurance for my family and pension for the future retirement. After I was retired I had a plenty of free time. One might think how great it is not to work, but in fact it makes you think more about things in your life. That was the time when I decided that I want to move back to Uzbekistan. I thought that it would be great chance for me and my wife to finally take some rest and move back to our home land. When we were younger we couldn’t afford moving back even though we really wanted to, but now things have changed. I have my house here and in Uzbekistan and don’t have to worry about my children since they are independent now. So I told my wife, who had one year left to the retirement, about my idea. She was very happy about it. So we waited another year and then moved back. We only come to New York twice a year to make sure we don’t violate any laws. We both receive the pension as well as social security while we are in Uzbekistan. All we need to do is make sure we come to the US every six months. It works out great for us. I know a lot of immigrants from Central Asian countries who are my age and they do the same.”

57
Farhod, 70, Uzbekistan

The interviews with the respondents indicate that it only took them one visit to realize that they don’t see themselves living back in their countries origin. There are several reasons to this phenomenon but as the interviews showed couple of them dominate over the others.

"Finally after I got my citizenship I visited Uzbekistan. I don’t know whether it’s those ten years that I haven’t been home that changed me or Uzbekistan simply didn’t develop at all. While walking on the streets I was thinking to myself: “How could I live here?” It might sound harsh but everything around me looked pretty much wild. People don’t smile, never say ‘excuse me’ and are very rude. I remember when I went to the store the sales assistant had an attitude and was extremely rude to me. I was shocked by that and when I asked to talk to the manager she told me to get the **** out. Not that I am Americanized I don’t see these things as normal. People around me looked at me as if I just came from another planet. They are used to this kind of attitude because that is how they are. The lack of culture was probably the biggest reason that killed any desire to move back home.”

Aziz, 40, Uzbekistan

"I went home five years later when I saved some money and got my papers. Nostalgia disappeared as soon as I got off the plane and took the cab to get home. The cab driver was trying to rob me by charging me way too much money for the ride that didn’t cost that much. It’s not like there are yellow cabs and you know or at least assume how much the ride will cost you. Everyone tries to take advantage of you especially if they know you are visiting from America. It totally makes sense to me because the salaries are so low there and people need to provide their means of subsistence. I don’t want to become one of them and that’s why I am not planning to move back home, at least in the nearest future.”

Nazgul’, 37, Kyrgyzstan

31 “Papers” imply any document that gives an immigrant the status of a legal resident. It can be Green Card or citizenship, or even a Work Authorization Card, usually called “White Card”.

58
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the major reasons and outcomes of the immigration of Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks to the US. Multiple findings were made. The major reasons for immigration appeared to be: the lack of jobs and low wages, extremely high levels of corruption, and unequal opportunities and discrimination in the three Central Asian countries. The results of the study indicate that the main part of immigrants arrived to the US on tourist visa and simply overstayed it. When defining what motivated immigrants choose New York as their place of residents it was discovered that employment opportunities and higher wages comparing to the other parts of the country played the biggest role in their decision. The following two factors were also found to be important: the biggest Russian speaking population in the US is located in New York and the relatively low chance to be deported due to the huge influx of illegal immigrants in New York. According to the outcomes of the study Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Sheepshead Bay, Avenue U, Neck Road, Kings Highway, Rego Park, Forest Hills, and Bensoumphurst were determined as the major neighborhoods with large concentrations of Central Asian immigrants. The focus of the study was also made on the process of adaptation of immigrants in New York. The following was concluded: the two biggest problems that immigrants face here are language barrier and finding a job. Sometimes people assume that after moving to the US immigrants Americanize and forget their culture. Exactly the opposite was discovered in this study. As Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks immigrate to the US their social ties are mostly constructed with their countrymen, all of the national holidays are celebrated and it is mostly the native language that is spoken in the households. There are main two types of occupations where the majority of Central Asian immigrants are employed, they are: construction work (men) and home attendant (women). Taking into account that these jobs are
considered unskilled and low wage it is not surprising that most of the respondents appeared to be dissatisfied with the amount of hours worked per week. Another factor that respondents disliked about their life in the US was the racism that as they stated become even worse after September, 11 attacks. The research shows that nine eleven attacks fueled the discrimination of the Central Asian immigrants as they are also the representatives of Muslim world. The flip side of the coin appeared to be freedom that according to sixty percent of the sample is their favorite part about this country. The final part of the research studied the intentions of immigrants to return to the country of their origin and the results revealed that the desire or unwillingness of immigrants to move back entirely depends on the amount of years lived in the US. Those who just arrived tend to want to immigrate back more than those who have been here for a while. As the latter group gets older their intentions to move back home grow.
Bibliography


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