

**Challenging the Discourse on Trafficking in Ukraine: Including the Cultural  
Dimension and Problematizing Women's "Consent"**

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## **Abstract**

This research identifies and questions several key characteristics of the dominant public discourse on trafficking in Ukraine. It focuses on two issues: firstly, on introducing the cultural dimension of trafficking, which has been mentioned but not sufficiently studied in the existing literature and, secondly, on problematizing the binary approach taken in the public discourse in Ukraine of consensual migration vs. non consensual trafficking.

For this purpose the interviews conducted by the anti-trafficking NGO La Strada with 23 trafficked women upon their arrival back to Ukraine have been analyzed. The content analysis, used as a main tool of research, has shown that first, apart from economic factors that shaped these interviewed women's decision to leave Ukraine there was also a cultural dimension that included the legacy of the socialist ideology, the post-1991 transitional period with the import of "western glamour", the psychological climate in the family, etc. Second, the analysis of the interviews has shown that in all 23 cases the trafficked women did give their express consent to traffickers either verbally or in a written form. This shows that trafficking could be a "voluntary" act, but that, in turn, does NOT mean that the trafficked women consented to be exploited, abused, etc.

My analysis of the La Strada's interviews also shows that the 23 trafficked women tried to frame their narrations as retrospective justification of consent and according to the pattern created by the public discourse in order to reintegrate back into their families and communities.

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## INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented increase in trafficking in women since 1991 has caused many debates and discussions in political circles and in the media in Ukraine. My MA Thesis deals with two issues of the dominant public discourse in Ukraine, namely only-economic explanation of trafficking and consensual/non-consensual binary approach to this phenomenon. My MA Thesis aims at broadening the public discourse by showing that economic frame of explaining increase in trafficking is not enough and that the concept of women's consent to be trafficked is rather complex.

In the dominant public discourse the cause for the increase in trafficking is seen in the extreme conditions of poverty and in the high level of unemployment of Ukrainian women (Bandurka, 2003; Levchenko, Udalova, Trubavina, 2005, Ukraine Country report, 1999). Such an oversimplified approach to trafficking is convenient for the Ukrainian bureaucratic system, as many corrupted officials may themselves profit from that highly lucrative business (Bandurka, 2003, 69 and Haveman, Wijers, 2001, 7). However, the economic explanation of trafficking is insufficient, if only because not all poor women let themselves be trafficked. The cultural dimension, which is overlooked in the existing literature on trafficking, should be studied. By cultural dimension I mean cultural, psychological and emotional forces that shape and construct women's decision to leave Ukraine.

In the dominant Ukrainian discourse trafficking is considered an involuntary act and the binary approach of "consensual migration" vs. "nonconsensual trafficking" is used in public documents (Levchenko, Udalova, Trubavina, 2005, 9). The assumption is that women will never give their consent to be trafficked, whereas women who have given it, are perceived as migrants for sex work who *a priori* knew the consequences and thus "got what they deserved". I state that

such a binary approach is problematic and oversimplified. It creates a wrong image of the trafficked women in the public discourse rather than showing the complexity of their consent. In my MA Thesis I will unpack the notion of consent and show that even if women give an express consent to be trafficked, they never give express consent to prostitute themselves or to be kept in slavery-like conditions of forced labor (whether of a sexual nature or not). The problem with the binary approach to consent is in the equation of express consent with indirect consent, the latter meaning that if a woman agrees to one thing, connected to another, thus she gives her indirect consent to that another thing, in that case to prostitute herself, etc.

Thus, my central argument is: *Women's narrations are framed as retrospective self-justifications due to simplistic economic-only and binary approach taken in the public discourse on trafficking in Ukraine. This approach has to be broadened by including the cultural dimension of trafficking and studying and acknowledging the complexity of women's consent to be trafficked.* The central questions will be: What are the cultural factors that shape and construct women's decision to leave Ukraine? Do the trafficked women really give consent to the trafficker? Why do women retrospectively have to justify themselves? And last but not least-how can this discourse be broadened?

## **Methodology**

My empirical analysis will be based on 19 case files, which incorporate 23 interviews with 23 trafficked women conducted by social workers and psychotherapists of La Strada, the period those cases cover is 1997-2006. My analysis will focus on two issues, namely on introducing the cultural dimension of trafficking in women and on problematizing the binary approach of consent/no-consent taken in the public discourse on trafficking in Ukraine, arguing that trafficking can be a "voluntary act". My purpose will be not to analyze the Ukrainian discourse on trafficking *per se*, but the trafficked women's narrations, how these women

retrospectively try to justify their decision to leave Ukraine, what are the cultural factors that have shaped this decision. I will also show the complexity of women's consent and prove that in all 19 case files they give express consent to be trafficked, though this complex notion does not fit to the binary approach taken in the public discourse.

I decided to approach La Strada in order to get the empirical material, because first it is the biggest international NGO which aims at combating and preventing trafficking in Ukrainian women and second, because this organization allows journalists and scholars to use their materials on the principle of anonymity. Thus the general public can have access to the trafficked women's narrations, but that also implies that the latter frame them according to public discourse. The selected interviews were conducted mainly for psychotherapeutical purposes by social workers and psychotherapists of La Strada, therefore some of them were incomplete or represented only facts and figures. The interviews were based on a questionnaire and then followed by an open conversation. In accordance with La Strada policy, I was not allowed to conduct interviews with the trafficked women, nor did La Strada provide me with the names and addresses of those women due to the principle of anonymity and because I do not have a psychological qualification to work with trafficked women.

Still I consider the 19 case files very useful for my research, as they clearly represent the pattern on trafficking in the dominant discourse, created by media and politicians and which partly influences La Strada as well, as it is working in the specific Ukrainian context. The 23 interviewed women did not have much freedom in expressing the emotional and psychological underpinnings of their decision, and while briefly mentioning their concerns, these women emphasize the economic situation and self-justifying arguments. This happens partly because the interviewees are never "free" in expressing their thoughts as they know (or think they know) what answers are expected from them. In the specific case of interviewing the trafficked women

by La Strada, its social workers and psychotherapists started with a questionnaire, thus there are certain issues they wish to discuss and presumably certain answers they expect to hear. All case files are in Russian and Ukrainian, written in the third or in the first person narration. I will refer to those written in the third person as secondary sources, while those written in the I-narration I would regard as an actual voice of the trafficked woman. However, it would not be correct to refer even to the first person narrations as “an actual voice”, as they have already been interpreted by La Strada workers.

The main method of research of my empirical materials will be Klaus Krippendorff's content analysis. In defining content analysis as a tool, I will follow Krippendorff definition: “Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” and “Content analysis could be characterized as a method of inquiry into symbolic meaning of messages” (Krippendorff, 1980, 21). Krippendorff emphasizes that messages do not have one single meaning, and could be looked at from numerous perspectives (in my case it will be a feminist perspective). According to Holsti, content analysis should be an objective and systematic identification of the characteristic messages (Holsti 1969, quoted in Riffe, Lacy, Fico, 1998, 19).

### **Structure of the MA Thesis**

In Chapter I of my MA Thesis I will first give a brief literature review about the key works on trafficking and show which historic, neoliberal and legal approaches to this phenomenon are used on the international scale and in the specific Ukrainian context. I will also analyse the Ukrainian discourse, which on trafficking is set in tight boundaries of the economic-only frame of this phenomenon as well as the binary approach to consensual migration vs. non-consensual, involuntary trafficking.

Although scholars such as Jyoti Sanghera, Anti-Trafficking Advisor and UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, questions the dominant assumption that poverty is the only cause of the increase in trafficking on the international level (Sanghera, 2005, 5), the Ukrainian public discourse still firmly focuses on the economic explanation of trafficking. Moreover, I will discuss the approach of The 2001 *UN Training manual for combating trafficking in women and children*, which states: “*trafficking is never voluntary*” (UN Training manual for combating trafficking, 2001, 12) and will analyze what approach to the voluntariness of trafficking is taken in the Ukrainian public discourse.

In Chapter II, I will explore and analyze the gap in the existing literature on the cultural dimension of trafficking and will focus on cultural factors, the concept of consent, its consequences and its retrospective justification. I will study the roots of the cultural factors that shaped women’s decision to let themselves be trafficked, constituted by trafficked women’s desires, expectations, and desperate dreams about a better life abroad. Chapter II will also explore the concept of consent and its complexity, rather than the binary approach taken in the public discourse, the consequences of this consent, such as sexual abuse, beatings, rape, and the humiliations women underwent in the destinations countries. In this chapter I will also study what difficulties Ukrainian women face upon their arrival back to Ukraine and why they use self justifying arguments.

Chapter III will present the findings of the analysis of the 23 interviews conducted by social workers and psychotherapists of the International Anti Trafficking Center La Strada founded in Ukraine in 1997. The analysis will show how women frame their narrations retrospectively in order to justify themselves and to be accepted back into their families and communities. The narrations are framed according to the pattern that the Ukrainian dominant discourse and potential audience of journalists, politicians, Ukrainian citizens are ready to

accept, namely that poverty was the only reason for leaving Ukraine and that the women did not give their consent to be trafficked. However, by using content analysis, I will show that the women explicitly or implicitly mention the cultural reasons and that they actually gave their express consent to be trafficked, which not to say consented to prostitution, forced labor, etc.

“I’d like to tell everyone that I love Ukraine, because it is my country, I was born here and here my ancestors were born and died, my children will live here ... the success depends on us, do not try to find easy ways, do love Ukrainian culture, traditions, customs...” (X, case # 14).

This trafficked woman’s message explicitly addresses the nationalistic “patriotic” political circles, which fail to recognize the possibility of “voluntary” trafficking and its cultural dimension. In the conclusion I will answer the central questions and will elaborate more on that quotation, as it clearly represents how this woman frames her narration in accordance to the public discourse on trafficking and uses retrospective self-justifications. I will also give my propositions for the broadening of the public discourse by changing the negative image of the trafficked women.

## **CHAPTER I: Literature review**

### **Trafficking in women - internationally and in the Ukrainian context**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter I aims to overview the key literature on trafficking and to discuss historical, legal and neoliberal approaches to trafficking in women on the international scale and in the specific Ukrainian context. The main purpose of this chapter is to critically analyze how the above mentioned approaches conceptualize the issue of trafficking and to what extent the cultural explanations are included. I will also show the approaches used to differentiate trafficking from migration for sex work and the key elements of the dominant Ukrainian discourse on trafficking.

In 1.1 I will study historical and legal approaches to trafficking. Firstly, I will analyze the works of Kamala Kempadoo, Sietske Altink, Van Drenth and De Haan, and the UN Conventions of 1949 and 2000 in order to build a historical framework and to show that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century trafficking was perceived as trafficking into forced prostitution, whereas that perception was broadened in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Secondly, I will analyze the legal approach to trafficking on the international level, asking which definition of this phenomenon is given in the international documents (such as The 2000 UN Convention, the CEDAW Convention, the UN Trafficking Manual) and how these documents differentiate trafficking and migration. In 1.2 I will discuss the works of such scholars as Vincente Navarro, Rey Koslowski, Susie Jacobs and others to see how they explain the increase in trafficking on the international scale and what role the so called “push”, “pull” and “facilitating” factors play in this process. In 1.2 I will also explore the common assumption of poverty being the single cause for the increase in trafficking and show

that scholars such as Sanghera, have challenged the only economic explanation for the increase in trafficking.

In 1.3 and 1.4 I will analyze the Ukrainian context and the main elements of the dominant discourse on trafficking in women in Ukraine. I will show that this problem is addressed and studied only through economic/ neoliberal and legal perspectives in the key works on trafficking. In 1.4 I will also explore the imperfection of legislative and administrative systems which narrow down the issue of trafficking and fail to recognize the cultural dimension of trafficking.

### **1.1 Historical and legal approaches to trafficking in women**

Trafficking is a complex phenomenon and “as a trade and exploitation of labour under conditions of coercion and force” (Kempadoo, 2005, viii), it became a global problem in the mid-nineteenth century (Kempadoo, 2005, vii). However, at the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century trafficking was associated by anti-trafficking activists with global sex trade or migration for sex work. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century trafficking in women became a feminist concern as well; the special term of “White Slave Trade” was coined in order to distinguish trafficking in women from the trade in black African slaves. (Altink, 1995, 9).

According to Altink the fight against trafficking was developed in Western Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In The United Kingdom first feminist debates and discussions on the issue of trafficking were initiated by Josephine Butler (1828-1906), one of the first British activists against the legal regulation of prostitution and “white slavery”. In 1869 Butler first participated in the developing abolitionist movement against the CDActs (Contagious Diseases Acts) and in the early 1880s she became involved against the trafficking in girls (Van Drenth, De Haan, 1999, 89-93). Butler regarded the legal regulation of prostitution as a new form of slavery,

or “White Slavery”, as she called it and believed that women themselves should oppose legal “regulations of vice” (Van Drenth, De Haan, 1999, 106).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century trafficking as synonymous to the White Slave Trade, namely for the purpose of prostitution, received international attention and three conventions were adopted to combat this phenomenon (Kempadoo, 2005, x). The international instruments elaborated to suppress the White Slavery Trade included the International Agreement for the Suppression of the “White Slave Traffic” of 1904, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children of 1921, and the Slavery Convention of 1926 (The UN Response to trafficking in women and girls, 2002, 3).

Trafficking in persons into prostitution was considered “incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person” and in 1949 the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others was adopted (The 1949 UN Convention). What is significant is that this first UN Convention on trafficking recognized the possibility of a person to give consent to be trafficked, as the parties to that Convention agreed “to punish any person who...procures, entices or leads away, for purposes of prostitution, another person, *even with the consent of that person* or exploits the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person” (The 1949 UN Convention). The problematic sides of this definition are the equation of trafficking with sex trade only and the failure to differentiate between express and indirect consent (to be discussed below).

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the concept of trafficking in women has been broadened, which is reflected in the elaboration of the definition of this phenomenon in The 2000 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children that replaced the UN Protocol adopted in 1949. According to this definition:

Trafficking in human beings is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” (UN Protocol UNODCCP 2001).

Other international documents which aim at combating trafficking, such as Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) Convention (GAATW quoted in the UN Training Manual for combating trafficking, 2001, 14) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) (CEDAW, 1993, Article 6) recognize trafficking as a broad phenomenon, but fail to analyze the consent of a person to be trafficked. The above mentioned definitions raise the challenging question of whether a person could give his/her consent to be trafficked and whether the process of trafficking could be a “voluntary” act at least at a certain stage.

According to Ratna Kapur, Director of the Centre for Feminist Legal Research, the main problem in studying trafficking lies in the confusion that underpins the main discourse of this phenomenon, namely in the equation of trafficking with migration and sex work (Kapur, 2005, 29). Migration, as massive or individual movements of people has been constant through human evolution and should not be equated with trafficking, as trafficking is only “a subset or category of the broader migration concept” (Hague, 2006, 6). While these two phenomena are interrelated, the equation of migration even for sex work and trafficking leads to simplistic and unrealistic solutions in combating trafficking and reinforces “the gender bias that women and girls need constant male and state protection”, therefore, women are dissuaded to migrate (Sanghera, 2005, 11).

*The 2001 UN Training manual for combating trafficking in women and children* provides the crucial distinction between trafficking and migration, which is very problematic. According to its definition, migration is a process in which people “choose with their own consent to leave one place for another” (UN Training manual for combating trafficking, 2001, 11). Trafficking presupposes that people end up in abusive and exploitative conditions that they did not choose and that they are unable to get out (UN Training Manual for Combating Trafficking, 2001, 11). Thus, according to The 2001 UN Training Manual, the victims of trafficking will never give their consent to be trafficked, this manual emphasizes that “the key is to remember that while migration whether regular or irregular is usually voluntary, *trafficking is never voluntary*” (UN Training manual for combating trafficking, 2001, 12).

As follows from the historical and legal approaches discussed here, the demarcation line between voluntary and consensual migration versus involuntary and non-consensual trafficking is rather problematic (O’Connell Davidson, 1998, 9). Because migration could be involuntary and unfree, according to Jan Lucassen, Director of Research of the International Institute of Social Research (Lucassen, 1999, 11), while trafficking, as I have argued can be a “voluntary” act at the first stage of this complex process and thus the issue of women’s consent needs further analysis.

## **1.2 Neoliberal and cultural approaches to trafficking**

Another problem with the current approaches to trafficking is the emphasis on the conceptualization of trafficking mainly through economic and neoliberal frames. The constant process of globalization and the increase in trafficking to the third largest lucrative illegal business, behind the gun and drug trade (Report of the Expert Group, 2003) are explained mainly by the implementation of neoliberal practices. According to Vincente Navarro, the neoliberal

practices include reduction of state intervention in economic and social activities, free labor and financial markets, elimination of borders and barriers in order to stimulate commerce and investments and to allow mobility of goods and labor (Navarro, 2007, 9).

Economic globalization and its outcomes such as rapidly growing information and communication technologies, development of Internet, and opening of national borders foster transnational crimes (Koslowski, 2001, 337). Many scholars (Williams, Masika; Jordan) explain that neoliberalism causes the increase in trafficking on the international scale and the so called “push”, “pull” and “facilitating” factors have contributed to this increase as well. The “push” factors, as factors that made women leave their home countries; include the fall of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the Chinese socialist system, and the difficult economic situation and poverty in the developing and post-communist countries (Jordan, 2002, 27). Aurora Javate de Dios, for example, is explaining trafficking in Southeast Asia by an economic crisis, where the devaluation of currency and decline of economic growth have led to “experiencing joblessness at unprecedented rates” (Aurora de Dios, 1999, 43). While “pull” factors of trafficking, namely factors that attract women to the destination countries, are the economic and political progress, stability, and the absolute or relative prosperity and peace in the Western industrialized countries (Jordan, 2002, 28). Further, Ann Jordan, Director of the Initiative Against Trafficking in Persons at the International Human Rights Law Group, argues that such factors as low-cost transportation and communication technologies, fast speed Internet “facilitate” the work of traffickers (Jordan, 2002, 29).

However, economic-only explanation of trafficking, namely argument that the main factors of trafficking are “poverty, unemployment and the lack of economic opportunities” (Baumeister, Fink, 2005, 32) has been challenged. One of the scholars who question the common assumption of poverty as the principal cause of trafficking is Sanghera, Adviser on Trafficking,

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Sanghera, 2005, 5). She states that there are many causes of trafficking besides poverty, such as “lack of sustainable livelihood, structural inequalities in society, gender discrimination, war and armed conflict, and other forms of natural or constructed disasters”, though she is not discussing cultural factors (Sanghera, 2005, 7).

Therefore the neoliberal and economic approaches to the explanation of the increase in trafficking are too narrow and should be broadened. One of the most undertheorized is the cultural dimension of the process of trafficking, especially the cultural factors that shape women’s decision to let themselves be trafficked. Women may be driven away from home by “psychological problems owing to unpleasant encounters” (Wennerholm, 2002, 12). Diakiti points that one of the reasons why women agree to migrate is a longing for a materialistic lifestyle and the desire to participate in “the glamour nightlife” (Diakiti, 1999, quoted in Wennerholm, 12).

### **1.3 The Ukrainian public discourse on trafficking in the transitional post-1991 period**

Geographically Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe. It has a population of 46.2 million people and it gained independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The phenomenon of trafficking in women did not exist in the times of socialism due to strict migration rules and the Iron Curtain (Ukraine Country Report, 1999, 8). However, the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1991, ideological and physical boundary that divided Europe into socialist countries and Western countries, has led to the expansion of globalization to Ukraine and to development of its “dark side”, namely trafficking. Currently, Ukraine is considered the second largest sending country in Europe (Hughes, 2000, 1). Ukraine is still a country of origin, but recently it has become a transit country for trafficking in persons as well. “It is Ukrainian

citizens who constitute a considerable part of the live goods on the open and underground markets of Europe and Asia” (Ukraine Country Report, 1999, 5).

The dominant discourse on trafficking in contemporary Ukraine is created mostly by the media and political circles. This discourse sees globalization (Hughes, 2000, Ukraine country Report, 1999), extreme conditions of poverty (Denisova, 2008, Bandurka, 2003; Levchenko, Udalova, Trubavina, 2005, Ukraine Country report, 1999) and the imperfection of the Ukrainian legislation (Bandurka, 2003, Ukraine Country Report, 1999) as the root causes for the tremendous increase in trafficking in Ukrainian women in the post-1991 period. By *discourse* I mean:

“...a system of statements within which and by which the world can be known...It is discourse itself within which the world comes into being. It is also in such a discourse that speakers and hearers, writers and readers, come to an understanding about themselves, their relationship to each other and their place in the world (the construction of subjectivity). It is that complex of signs and practices that organizes social existence and social reproduction, which determines how experiences and identities are categorized” (Bill, Pal, 1999, 14)

The main “push” factor of trafficking in the public discourse is considered poverty – “difficult economic situation of population, inability to find a well-paid job...this concerns women in particular. Feminization of poverty pushes them to find different ways of earning money without considering the negative results” (Bandurka, 2003, 25). Liudmila Denisova, current Minister of Labor and Social Policies emphasized that “the problem of trafficking in people in contemporary Ukraine has an economic root” (Problem of trafficking in people has an economic root<sup>1</sup>, 2008). “According to UNDP, in Ukraine women constitute 80% of the unemployed due mostly to discrimination in hiring and disproportionate lay-offs, including illegal dismissals during maternity leave...for those in the work force, women’s salaries equaled

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Liudmila Denisova, Minister of Labor and Social Policies

only 73% those of men in comparable positions” (UNDP Ukraine, 2004 quoted in DiCortemiglia, 16).

There is still a traditional division into “feminine” and “masculine” professions in contemporary Ukraine: management, finance, public health sector are considered “masculine”. Statistical data show that Ukrainian women as a rule are employed in jobs that demand lower professional skills or in teaching and nursing professions that are considered “feminine” – thus being lowly paid and having a low prestige (Women 2000, 476). Therefore, “the greatest discrimination against women in the labour market is with regard to remuneration, despite the legal provisions on equal pay for equal work”, because regardless of the professional skills women’s salaries have not risen above 70% of men’s, which means that on average women earn only 70% of what men earn for the same work (Women 2000, 477).

The “pull” factors that attract Ukrainian women, which are the western countries by their comparative prosperity and stability. According to the statistics the most prioritized among Ukrainian migrants are Germany (11%), the USA (9%), Italy and Portugal (5% accordingly). Other popular destination countries among Ukrainian women are Russia, Spain, Switzerland, and France (Levchenko, Udalova, Trubavina, 2005, 16).

#### **1.4 Imperfection of Ukrainian administrative and legislative systems in combating trafficking**

A facilitating factor and another reason for the increase in trafficking in the dominant Ukrainian discourse is the imperfection of the country’s administrative and legislative systems. In Ukraine there is a well-developed network of corrupted officials in law enforcement agencies, migration offices, and embassies (Bandurka, 2003, 69 and Haveman, Wijers, 2001, 7). However, according to the Rector of the Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs, Olexander

Bandurka, corrupt officials in administrative positions create the necessary prerequisites for trafficking in persons not only in the countries of Eastern Europe, but also in the destination countries in Western Europe (Bandurka, 2003, 69). That is why this “facilitating” factor is a problem and should be combated not only in Ukraine, but in the destination countries as well.

The Ukrainian Government made attempts to devise ways to combat trafficking only in 1998, by adoption of the article 124(1) against trafficking in persons of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (Ukraine country report, 1999, 17). However, there has been a lot of criticism of that article, as the gap between the written law and its application in practice was too big. New terms have been introduced in Article 124 (1), such as "debt bondage," and "sexual exploitation", but precise definitions were not given and the descriptions were not harmonized with the standards of the international legislature (Pishchulina 2003).

In 2001 Ukraine adopted a new Criminal Code, which includes Chapter III Article 149 on *Trafficking in human beings and other illegal transfer deals in respect of a human being*. This Article has again been heavily criticized by experts (Evsyukova, 113, Bandurka, 35-37), because the definition of trafficking was not formulated clearly. Such characteristics of trafficking as the use of force and other forms of deception, fraud and abduction, as well as recruitment, transfer of persons had not been mentioned and thus this definition did not correspond to the international norms adopted by the 2000 UN Protocol. It is significant, however, that the consent of the women to be trafficked is mentioned in Article 149. trafficking according to this article can be “legal or illegal movement of that person, *with or without his/her consent*, across the border of Ukraine” (Criminal code of Ukraine, 2001). Regardless of the definition in the Criminal Code, the dominant Ukrainian public discourse considers trafficking as solely involuntary act (Levchenko, Udalova, Trubavina, 2005, 9).

## Conclusion

In Chapter I, I have tried to analyze how the increase in trafficking on the international scale is explained in the literature and what are the main characteristics of the dominant Ukrainian discourse on this phenomenon. The common assumption of the root of the problem only in poverty (Baumeister, Fink, 2005, 32) leads to narrowing down the discourse on trafficking. Moreover, some scholars (Williams, Masika; Jordan) see the global implementation of neoliberal practices as the cause for the increase in trafficking. International documents have devised ways to prevent and combat this most inhuman business, and the 2000 UN Protocol, GAATW have elaborated a definition that is rather broad and encompasses all stages of the process.

I have also studied the attempts to challenge neoliberal and economic lens through which the process of trafficking is perceived made by Sanghera. However, in the dominant Ukrainian discourse the approach to that problem is oversimplified, as economic reasons are seen as root causes and other factors are not taken into account, besides trafficking is considered only involuntary. The cultural dimension and factors that construct the women's consent to be trafficked have not been sufficiently studied and they are undertheorized in the existing literature. Thus, the focus of the next chapter will be on the cultural dimension of trafficking in Ukrainian women and clarification the of complexity of their consent to be trafficked.

## **CHAPTER II: The cultural dimension of trafficking in women (theoretical issues)**

### **Introduction**

Chapter II aims to explore and analyze the gap in the existing literature on the cultural dimension of trafficking in the dominant Ukrainian discourse. I will study the cultural factors that shape women's decision to let themselves be trafficked, the notion of consent, its consequences and retrospective justification of this consent in order to be in the frame of this discourse. In this chapter I will support the main argument of the thesis, namely I will show that economic-only approach to trafficking is too narrow and that the cultural dimension of trafficking is overlooked and undertheorized. I will also show the gaps in the binary approach taken in the public discourse.

Firstly, in 2.1 I will study the cultural factors of women's decision to let themselves be trafficked, how they perceive their "home" and what kind of utopian vision they have, what are their desires, fantasies, expectations about the life in the target countries. Secondly, in 2.2 I will study what definition is given to the concept of consent and its typology, which has been elaborated in the work of David Archard, an English philosopher. Following Archard, I will distinguish between express and indirect consent and will show that the equation of these two forms led to a problematic attitude towards the trafficked women in the public discourse. Thirdly, in 2.3 I will analyze the consequences of consent and the trafficked women's narrated experience in the destination countries and what a contrast it made to their expectations. Lastly, in 2.4 I will analyze the post traumatic state in which women found themselves upon returning to

Ukraine and what pressure they experience from the public discourse and why they use self-justification arguments.

## **2.1 Emotional and psychological coloring of women's decision**

In this subchapter I will study the reasons, and the emotional and psychological underpinnings that shape and form women's decision to leave Ukraine and let themselves be trafficked. The Ukrainian cultural milieu, which is constituted by a certain psychological climate in the family, experience of domestic violence, intertwined with influence of the transitional post-soviet period and twisted information about the west, the so called "western glamour" contribute greatly to formation of women's wishes and dreams to leave Ukraine in search of a better life.

One of the factors that shape women's decision to let themselves be trafficked is their post-soviet mentality, which reflects the soviet legacy of perception of the West. Maria Tchomarova, an experienced Bulgarian psychotherapist, argues that the legacy of the communist regime and the division of the world into "black and white" have created fertile soil for a rapid increase in trafficking in women. The division into black and white is the result of the psychological mechanism of "splitting and projection". Everything negative was projected onto western countries, while it also had existed in the communist societies; still this existence had been rigorously denied. "All difficult, painful and disconcerting questions, going beyond the idealized communist social image were split and projected, repressed and rationalized" (Tchomarova, 7). The officials created the myth of the Hell in the West, while unofficial data challenged that portrayal of the West and showed western countries as wealthy and prosperous.

Even in contemporary post-soviet countries women continue to believe in the unofficial portrayal of the West and in "a myth of the idealized forbidden fruit of happiness, prosperity and

freedom” (Tchomarova, 7). This myth about the idealized life in the West Donna Hughes calls “western glamour”, which was brought to post-Soviet countries with soap operas like *Santa Barbara*, and Hollywood movies like *Pretty Woman*. (Hughes, 2005, 223). Moreover, these “western glamour” and collapse of communist ideology have changed post-Soviet women’s values and beliefs. “A much reported 1997 survey of fifteen-year-old schoolgirls found that 70 percent of schoolgirls said they wanted to be prostitutes...It is unlikely that many fifteen-year-old schoolgirls truly know the realities of prostitution. This finding is more likely an indication of how the media has glamorized and romanticized prostitution” (Hughes, 2005, 224).

The positive side of state socialism was the creation of some form of equality between men and women, which “made paid employment a norm for women”, but made women “redundant with the collapse of the communist economy” (Morokvasic, 2004, 13). According to Morokvasic, women in the post-soviet context have to adapt to the transitional period and to take jobs abroad as part of a caring role for the family. The justification they use is “I had to feed my kids” (Morokvasic, 2004, 13). Thus, many women take up a “caring” or a “bread-winner” roles in their families in the transitional period.

Another cultural factor, intertwined with social and political changes in the transitional post-Soviet period is the psychological climate in the family, which shapes and constructs women’s consent greatly. Tchomarova argues that the family experience and psychological relationships in the family of the trafficked women are very important especially in adolescence. Adolescence is the most difficult transition period, however when the family and society are in crisis they could not “contain the adolescent’s ambivalence and provide structure, space, help, and cooperation for young people” (Tchomarova, 9). Thus the young girls suffer, they can not cope with aggression both externally and internally. Tchomarova also emphasizes that single parent families are especially vulnerable, as more is expected from one parent. Furthermore,

women are most vulnerable to trafficking when they had the unfavorable psychological climate in the family, such as domestic violence, incest, rape. (Tchomarova, 9).

Therefore, a complex set of cultural factors, with an impact of socio economic changes in the transitional post-Soviet period have shaped women's decision to leave Ukraine and let themselves be trafficked. I will analyze the emotional underpinnings of this women's decision from the constructionist approach to emotions. This approach sees emotions as "not biologically based or genetically programmed", but as influenced and "constructed" by culture (Reddy, 2001, 34). Moreover, though Clifford Geertz' argument has been criticized, I would follow his statement, in which he defines culture as a symbolic system and claims that culture determines people's thinking and emotions, which includes wishes, motivations, dreams and desires (Geertz quoted in Reddy, 2001, 41). It is the influence of Ukrainian culture, namely the Specific soviet legacy and the post-1991 transitional period, "caring" and "bread-winner" roles that women perform in that transitional period, the psychological climate in families and the romanticized by the media "western glamour" which are crucial to be studied in order to understand how women's decision is constructed.

Ronald de Sousa views "emotions as emerging, like our other mental capacities, out of biological roots that connect us to the world, including our past and future. The mode of this connection has gradually shifted from the simple causality of reflexes to increasingly sophisticated modes of representation..." (Sousa, 1987, 113). Thus, desires and fantasies about a prosperous life in the West are rooted in the experience Ukrainian women had in past and present and are linked to the utopian vision of "glamour" and happiness in the West. Sousa argues that the targets of emotions are real objects (Sousa, 1987, 116) and "where there is a target, the emotion...will be motivated by some attribute of the target, which will be a focus of the subject's attention" (Sousa, 1987, 116).

For the Ukrainian women the so-called targets are the destination countries, which are, according to statistics, Germany (11%), the USA (9%), Italy (5%), Portugal (5%) and others. (Levchenko, Udalova, Trubavina, 2005, 16). Though the attributes that accomplish these targets are very diverse and individual for different women. One of such attributes is “personal dissidence”, studied by Joanna Laliotou (Laliotou, 2007, 8). According to Laliotou “personal dissidence” is a desire to change the place of living, to travel, to see the world “or simply to try one’s luck outside the borders the native land” (Laliotou, 2007, 8).

The constructionist approach on emotions and such elements of the cultural dimension as legacy of the state socialism, the psychological climate in the family and in society in the post-Soviet period, the “caring” and “bread-winner” roles performed by women and the powerful imported “western glamour” have contributed greatly to the shaping of women’s decision to leave Ukraine. The targets of women’s emotions are the developed western countries, but attributes that follow these targets are very diverse. These attributes can be “personal dissidence”, as a wish to travel and to see the world, desire to perform the caring role and to take up a well paid job abroad to provide for children, to find a good father for one’s children and a good partner for oneself, just a normal wish to be happy. When women’s decision to leave Ukraine is formed, they are looking for ways to get out and very often traffickers propose these women their services. Then comes debated question of whether women give their consent to be trafficked.

## 2.2 The concept of women's consent given to the trafficker

In distinguishing between migration and trafficking, many researchers use a binary demarcation line: voluntary and consensual illegal migration versus involuntary and non-consensual trafficking. (O'Connell Davidson, 1998, 9). The key element in distinguishing between migration and trafficking is woman's consent, which is narrowed in many international documents. *The 2001 UN Training Manual for combating trafficking in women and children* states that "trafficking is never voluntary", which means that women will never voluntarily agree to be forced into labor, prostitution, etc. (UN Trafficking Manual, 2001, 12). Moreover, the concept of consent is used to distinguish between "innocent victims" of trafficking, on the one hand, and "guilty sex workers" who had known they would perform sexual labor, on the other hand. (Chapkis, 2003, 929). This approach to involuntary trafficking without women's consent vs. voluntary migration with the consent of "guilty sex workers" is oversimplified. It especially fails to recognize the distinction between different kinds of consent which could clarify the complexity of the situation in which the women found themselves.

David Archard gives the distinction between the types of consent. "*Express*" consent is consent that has been explicitly and publicly stated, when there is a sign of agreement. In the basic sense, express consent is given by saying "I consent to ...", or by signing one's name under a written statement of the form "I consent to...", or by responding to an inquiry of whether one does consent with the words such as "I do" (Archard, 1998, 8). "*Tacit*" or "*implicit*" is a form of consent that is implied or understood from a person's action. The "tacit" consent is constructed by the model –"playing by the rules of the game" (Archard, 1998, 8), when people are taking part in the activities constituted by the rules, thus they are "agreeing to abide by those rules" (Archard, 1998, 8).

However, tacit and express consent should be distinguished from *indirect* consent, whereby “consent is given to that which is connected to that which is directly consented to” (Archard, 1998, 10). In Archard’s explanation this means that if a person expressly consents to something, let’s call it X, and that X is connected to another thing let’s say Y, then he/she indirectly consents to Y and to all consequences that it may bring. Although, the person might not be aware of the connection between X and Y, by giving consent to X, indirectly he or she consents to Y, as well. The fourth type of consent in Archard’s typology is the “quasi-consent”, which I will not use in my research and thus I will not elaborate on.

In my further analysis and development of the argument, I will take Archard’s typology as a frame. As stated above, the Ukrainian discourse on trafficking created by media and politicians fails to recognize the complexity of consent and therefore the complexity of the process of trafficking. It is easier to take the concept of consent as a key feature and to argue that the trafficked women are “innocent victims” (Chapkis, 2003, 929) in case they did not consent to prostitute themselves, whereas those who agreed to perform sexual services are “guilty sex workers” (Chapkis, 2003, 929). However, while I argue that women do give their express consent to be trafficked, in Ukrainian public discourse express consent is equated with the indirect consent to perform sexual services. This equation is rather problematic, as on the one hand trafficking could be for other purposes than forced prostitution, and on the other hand, the women expressly consented to the utopian vision they had about the destination countries and not to the slavery like conditions.

However, traffickers usually manipulate women’s consent, forcing them into prostitution, or labor, stating that the women *a priori* knew the consequences and indirectly consented to them. Viktor Malarek, using undercover investigation, provides evidence of a criminal who claimed that maximum 10 % of women did not know they would be forced into

prostitution when they agreed to the work abroad, the rest realized clearly their future duties (Malarek, 2004, 56). This approach dominates the Ukrainian public discourse on trafficking, according to which women had known from the beginning the nature of their job abroad and went abroad because they are uneducated and extremely poor.

### **2.3 Expectations vs. reality in the West**

In this sub-chapter I will study the consequences of women's consent, which are usually sharply contrasted to their dreams and expectations. For the researchers it is challenging to study the conditions in which women are kept in the destination countries, as they are very traumatizing for women. In addition, because of the clandestine nature of that business it is hard to get the reliable data about the nature of the work performed. Women are usually trafficked for various purposes "including for the purposes of prostitution, domestic work, marriage, industrial and agricultural work, and trade in human organs" (Sanghera, 2005, 7). The commercial and sexual nature of trafficking predominates, and Nana Derby argues that the contemporary forms of bonded labor should be still called "slavery" - "dept bondage and servitude...largely replaced slavery when it was finally abolished in the 1880s" (Derby 2003, quoted in Kempadoo xii). The statement of the notorious criminal and trafficker Tarzan that "you can buy a woman for \$ 10.000 and make your money back in a week if she is pretty and she is young" (Malarek, 2004, 57) supports the argument of the slavery-like conditions in which women are kept.

Figures and statistics on the consequences of trafficking into prostitution and the real data of selling of women with fixed prices are terrifying. "According to the research carried out by Ecpat International in 2004, Ukrainian girls are sold for between \$ 2,000 - \$ 10,000 each, depending on the destination country. A Ukrainian minor can earn in Israel up to \$ 50,000 - \$

100,000 per year for her pimp, while keeping for herself almost nothing” (O’Brian, Van Den Borne, Noten, 2004: 35 quoted in Di Cortemiglia).

Tchomarova has divided the consequences of trafficking that women face in the destination countries into 3 types. First, as she claims, are examples of severe violence – rape, torture, hunger, death threats. The aim of pimps is to put women in extreme surviving conditions. The trafficked women live and “work” under the constant pressure of violence, and do not think about anything but physical surviving. “The price for this is high and causes psychological traumas. The perpetrators use this to force women to obey them, and to become prostitutes” (Tchomarova, 10). Women “live in appalling conditions, suffering frequent beatings and threats. Those who resist are severely punished. Those who refuse are sometimes maimed or killed” (Malarek, 2004, 4). Further, O’Connell Davidson claims that the personal biographies of many trafficked women “include various forms of sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse” (O’Connell Davidson, 39).

The second type of consequences that the women face is physical exhaustion, according to Tchomarova (Tchomarova, 11). The trafficked women are not given a rest, no possibility to remain alone and to recover. They often work up to 20 hours per day and serve up to 30 clients, which leads to total physical and psychological exhaustion (Tchomarova, 11). The only “help” they get from the traffickers they is drugs.

The third type of consequences in Tchomarova’s typology is total control and isolation of women. The trafficked women are usually kept in one place, without a possibility to communicate. Very often they do not even know the language of the country they are working in, which further complicates their chances to escape. Thomarova argues that the need for communication can not be suppressed, but communicating only with the perpetrator, the woman

receives twisted information about herself and the world, as she is constantly told that she “owes money”, “she has to pay herself back” (Tchomarova, 11).

## **2.4 Women’s post traumatic state disorder and retrospective self-justification**

The provided data has indicated a sharp contrast between the women’s expectations, desires and wishes that underpinned their consent to be trafficked and the negative experiences the trafficked women faced in the destination countries. When giving consent, the women desperately wanted to believe in the utopian vision they had created and in their hopes and dreams. Besides the physical harm that the trafficked women have had to endure in the destination countries, which includes pregnancy and HIV positive results (Thomarova, 30), the women experienced moral and psychological traumas, the collision of their dreams. By trauma I mean “a stress or blow that may produce disordered feelings or behavior” and “a state or condition produced by such a stress or blow” (Cathy Caruth, 184), using Cathy Caruth’s interpretation.

Upon returning to Ukraine, many of the trafficked women suffer from the so-called “post-traumatic stress disorder” or PTSD, whose symptoms include “physical sensations, horrific images or nightmares, behavioral reenactments, or a combination of these” (Der Kolk, Der Hart, 1995, 164). The women who managed to come back are exposed to a set of fears, according to Nadejda Stoytcheva, psychotherapist, working at La Strada Bulgaria. These fears encompass the fear of being caught back home by the traffickers, the fear to lose and to disgrace the family, to be alone and not to be able to have a normal life again, fear of the future (Stoytcheva, 33). The women’s fears are influenced by a mixture of other feelings of guilt of making a mistake, of not being able to provide their family with funds, of shame – of being “dirty” and “spoilt”, and the feeling of betrayal by God, by State, by her family (Stoytcheva, 33).

Besides the traumatic state disorder, another stressful factor for women upon their arrival to Ukraine is blame created by the public discourse, even family and especially politicians for their consent to be trafficked. Ukrainian dominant discourse recognizes trafficking only as an involuntary act, while giving consent is regarded as migration for sex work and vehemently blamed. This blame is implicitly or explicitly perceived by the women and in their post trafficking narratives they try to exonerate themselves from blame and to justify themselves. Kozhouharova claims that because of the complex bureaucratic system in the ex-Soviet countries, which is very relevant in the Ukrainian context as well, some officials who could help the trafficked women are reluctant to do that. Therefore they hide behind the bureaucratic rules and restrictions, which “are like an impenetrable shield behind which the officials can stay undisturbed, unaffected by the other person’s tragedy with no feeling of guilt whatsoever” (Kozhouharova, 22).

According to Van der Kolk, Founder and Medical Director of the Trauma Center in Brookline, complete recovery from the trauma happens when “the person does not suffer any more from the reappearance of traumatic memories in the form of flashbacks, [or] behavioral reenactments” (Der Kolk, 1995, 176). However, many traumatized people live in two different realms – the world of trauma and post-traumatic experience and in the realm of daily life (Der Kolk, 1995, 176). The trafficked women experience live in a post-traumatic state of collision of the dreams in which they believed or wanted desperately to believe, and a constant feeling of guilt and pressure from the public discourse created by the media and politicians.

The traumatic memory of the actual experience with trafficking, which “has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody...it is a solitary activity” (Der Kolk, Der Hart, 1995, 163), is transformed into a narrative memory and is reflected in the women’s post trafficking narrations. To some extent the women frame their narrative memories to fit the dominant public

discourse on trafficking. While mentioning their reasons for leaving Ukraine, the trafficked women try to narrate retrospectively that the experience in the destination countries has taught them to love Ukraine, which is their native country. Therefore, women's narrations are patriotically framed, as expected by the political nationalistic circles. The latter hear from the trafficked women what they want to hear without further analysis of emotional and psychological reasons that underpinned women's consent.

## Conclusion

To conclude, I have tried to argue that the Ukrainian dominant discourse on trafficking should be broadened and to show the cultural factors shaping women's decision to leave Ukraine, the complexity of their consent and how it is retrospectively reframed. I have shown that the Ukrainian context of trafficking is specific, due to the Soviet legacy, the difficult post-1991 transitional period, the impact of the imported "western glamour" and the psychological climate in families. I have analyzed the emotional and psychological underpinnings of consent, which has certain goals, targets and attributes, such as "personal dissidence" - to move and to see the world, desires to earn money in order to build a home of her dream or to find a foreigner who would love and support her as in Hollywood movie *Pretty Woman*.

However, the culturally constructed express consent with a saturate emotional coloring should not be equated with indirect consent, according to Archard's typology. In most cases women do not consent to prostitute themselves or to perform domestic labor in slavery-like conditions. The conditions that the trafficked women face in the destination countries sharply contrast with their dreams, expectations and secret hopes for a better life. Women definitely did not consent to beatings, rape, humiliations and other appalling conditions that the experience in the destination countries has brought.

The women, who managed to escape from the Hell abroad find themselves in two realms upon arrival to Ukraine. First, they are in the post traumatic state disorder of collision of dreams and constant flashbacks and reenactments of the harsh experience, and second, they face pressure and stigmatization by the dominant Ukrainian discourse. In most cases women try to self justify their consent retrospectively in their narratives, which are addressed in most cases to those who created that discourse – the media and political circles.

## **CHAPTER III: Analysis of the interviews with trafficked Ukrainian women conducted by La Strada (1997-2006)**

### **Introduction**

Chapter III presents an analysis of 19 case files that consist of 23 interviews with 23 trafficked Ukrainian women conducted by social workers and psychotherapists of the international Anti-Trafficking Organization La Strada. In Ukraine La Strada was founded in 1997 and its activities have been directed to the fulfillment of the La Strada Program, namely combating trafficking and supporting trafficked women. As an NGO, La Strada is working on issues on which the Ukrainian Government fails to succeed; it helps trafficked Ukrainian women in many parts of Europe due to a well-developed international network. La Strada provides assistance for trafficked women, such as Hot Lines and conducts educational programs among young people on the issues of trafficking. La Strada works in cooperation with other organizations, law enforcement bodies and lawyers in order to improve Ukrainian legislation, publishes and distributes materials and leaflets, conducts seminars and conferences. (La Strada official website).

La Strada's database is open to be accessed and analyzed by the general public: journalists, politicians, scholars, and ordinary Ukrainian citizens. Moreover, it is working in the Ukrainian context and therefore partly influenced by the dominant discourse on trafficking. La Strada follows economic-only approach to trafficking and sees the cause of the unprecedented increase in trafficking in the post 1991-period in the extreme conditions of poverty. An example of this is La Strada's overview of the situation with trafficking on their official website:

According to official data, 75% of unemployed persons in Ukraine are women. Pimps frequently use the difficult economic situation in Ukraine, which is in transition to a market economy, by capitalizing on conditions caused by the labor-market crisis. (La Strada official website).

The president of La Strada Ukraine, Nataliya Levchenko, has co-edited the book *Запобігання торгівлі людьми та експлуатації дітей* (Measures to prevent trafficking and exploitation in children), in which attention was drawn to the importance of studying psychological factors that shape women's decision to let themselves be trafficked. As the editors have emphasized these factors have not been studied sufficiently (Levchenko, Udalova, Trubavina, 2005, 16). The issue of voluntariness and involuntariness of trafficking has not been addressed by La Strada.

In 3.1 I will try to find answers to the following questions: What are the factors that shape women's decision to let themselves be trafficked? Are there only economic factors that influence women's decision to leave Ukraine? Are there cultural factors that play a role in women's decision to be trafficked? If there are cultural factors, which ones and how do they influence women's decision? In 3.2 I will study how these 23 women narrate about their consent to be trafficked. Did they give their consent to be trafficked? If they mention consent, in what form? What were the consequences of that consent? What are the self-justifying arguments women use in their narrations and why? Thus I hope to understand better the cultural dimension, if any, of the public discourse and to problematize women's consent.

### **3.1 The cultural dimension of trafficking in Ukrainian women**

This paragraph will focus on the analysis of 19 case files in order to find an answer to the question: *What are the factors that shape women's decision to let themselves be trafficked?* In the dominant discourse on trafficking in Ukraine the emphasis is put on the economic factor and

poverty as the main causes for the post-1991 increase in trafficking. However, *are there only economic factors that shape women's decision to leave Ukraine?* All 23 interviewed women emphasize poverty in their narrations. "Vita was the eldest child in the family; her family originates from a small village in the central part of Ukraine<sup>2</sup>. There was not enough money even to buy some frugal food" (Vita, case # 3), "Natalka had to work to send money to her sick mother and brother. Before the time she was proposed to work in Switzerland, she worked in a shop, but there was a shortage of money even for herself, she could not pay her rent" (Natalka, case # 5). Tanya "finished technical school but couldn't find a job. Almost all factories and plants in the city didn't work. Sometimes the family had nothing to eat but bread and water" (Tanya, case #8). "Oksana started working right after graduating from secondary school. But she didn't have enough money. Svitlana's mother was very sick and needed medicine" (Oksana, case #15). "Oksana's salary was \$ 200" and she worked as a waitress in the local restaurant" (Oksana, case #1).

It is clear from the 23 interviews with trafficked women that misery, the inability to earn money or just a very scanty income are the basic reasons for women to search for well-paid jobs "abroad". However, explaining trafficking and the decision to be trafficked only through the economic frame is very simplistic. First, not all women in limited economic conditions decide to leave Ukraine in search of a better life. Second, not all poor women let themselves be trafficked, consciously or unconsciously knowing about the nature of the proposed job. Thus, the focus of my analysis will be on the cultural dimension of trafficking and I will try to answer the question: *Are there any cultural factors that play a role in women's decision be trafficked?*

When reading and analyzing the 19 case files, a number of factors seem significant. First is the age of the trafficked women, which ranges between 16 and 26 and the period that these

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<sup>2</sup> I suppose it is an agricultural, non-industrial village

cases cover, between 1997 when La Strada started its activities in Ukraine and 2006. *Why would age be considered a “cultural factor”?* Not age *per se*, but these women’s age is an indication that they were born and spent their childhood during the socialist era, before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. An example is Olga, who was 25 in 2004, thus she had lived 12 years under socialism, or Marina – ‘I was borne in 1981’ (Marina, case #7), thus she was 10 when the socialist system collapsed. The personalities of the 23 trafficked women have been formed and influenced by the socialist ideology, including the Soviet mechanisms of “splitting and projection”,<sup>3</sup> as discussed in 2.2 of Chapter II.

Then the question arises of how the negative information about the West, created by Soviet officials and challenged by unofficial data, that portrayed it as “the idealized forbidden fruit of happiness, prosperity and freedom” (Tchomarova, 7) influenced the 23 women’s perception of “abroad”. *Could this “influence” be considered a cultural factor?* For example “Oksana (2004) had always wished to travel, to see new countries and to meet new people when she studied at school” (Oksana, case #1). Though her age is not indicated in the case, she graduated from a technical school and several years later went to Poland. This makes me assume that Oksana went to school in the early 1990s, after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Wish to travel is a normal wish, and it could not be only the “influence” of ambiguous information about the west during socialism. Still the naivety of perception of the West, formed under the influence of the Soviet mechanisms and unofficial data, should not be underestimated.

One more element related to cultural factors that came up in the interviewed material is the opening of borders after the fall of the Iron Curtain. *Can the fall of the Iron Curtain be a cultural factor that shaped women’s decision be trafficked?* Again, the opening of borders is not

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<sup>3</sup> Splitting and projection - black and white image created by communist countries, where the existence of all negative has been denied and projected onto western countries (Tchomarova, 7)

a cultural factor *per se*, but the consequences it has brought. Namely, the rapid flow of information, the powerful “western glamour”, imported in the form of Hollywood movies, such as *Pretty Woman*, released in 1990s and very successful not only in the US, but in Ukraine as well. All trafficked women and those 23 interviewed, in particular, could not process and judge realistically this “imported” life, the romanticized “western glamour” shown in those movies and dreamed about finding such happiness (usually represented by a happy marriage).

“The friend keeps on convincing Olga that the latter was too beautiful and young to remain divorced and moreover having two children to provide for. According to her friend Germans are good husbands and fathers, usually support their families and earn a lot. Thus, when Olga was proposed a job in Germany, she accepted the offer with joy, secretly expecting to find a good partner in life” (Olga, case #6)

It could be that both women (Olga and her friend) have that romanticized image of Germans as good fathers and partners from some Hollywood movies or soap operas. I can only guess what Olga meant by “secret expectations”, but I suppose this was a “glamour western life”, very attractive, prosperous and so much unachievable in her case. That is why I would say that the consequences of the opening of borders, such as import and impact of western movies and romanticized image of the West, are cultural factors that have shaped Olga’s (and other women from the 19 case files) decision to let herself be trafficked.

One more element related to cultural factors that came up while reading the 19 case files is the trafficked women’s family background. Therefore the next question will be: *How did the family background and psychological climate in the family influence women’s decision to let themselves be trafficked?* First, in 3 cases out of 19, women were brought up in single-parent families (Natalka, case # 5, Raisa, case # 9, Svitlana, case #11). Marina says for example:

“I have never known who my father was. My grandmother told that he had worked at the collective farm and died there during a fire. My mother died when I was 3 years old and my grandmother brought me up” (Marina, case #7).

Further, many women from the 19 case files were divorced and had children to provide for. (Tamara, case # 2, Iryna, case # 4, Olga, case # 6, Svitlana, case # 16). Several women from the 19 cases have experienced domestic violence, as Olga who divorced her husband because the latter “drank a lot and made a row,” thus she was left alone with two sons aged three and two years, completely disappointed in Ukrainian men (Olga, case # 6).

Besides children who fully depended on them, many trafficked women from the 19 interviews had a sick mother (Natalka, case # 5) or dependant brothers and sisters. An example is Iryna who had 2 brothers and 3 sisters who were waiting for the support from their eldest sister (Iryna, case # 4). The above listed family factors created a very unfavorable psychological climate for the women, as they were perceived as the only mature, the only healthy member in the family, who had to earn bread for the dependants. Tanya’s story supports that statement.

“Her farther left the family when she was 4 and her brother was 2 years old. In 1991 her brother was knocked down by a car. He stayed alive but became disabled. The mother couldn’t work because she had to take care of him”. (Tanya, case #8).

In Nadya’s case her farther died in a car accident and her mother was left with two little twin daughters and one “mature” daughter, Nadya who interrupted her studies due to that tragic situation in the family and started to earn money (Nadya, case #12). The analysis of the above cases shows that women from single-parent families, divorced, or those who have “dependants” are more prone to decide to be trafficked, as they are not satisfied with their family situation, marriage, income and decide to change them drastically by going abroad.

Throughout the analysis of the 19 case files another question that occurred to me was: *what role do the place of birth and the level of education play in shaping women’s decision?* The analysis of these specific 19 case files shows that almost all these women had come from small villages and towns from all over Ukraine. Though several women (Natalka and Oksana, case # 5,

Marina, case #7) moved to regional cities or to the capital of Ukraine before their being trafficked, only Raisa (Raisa, case # 9) was originally from Kiev. None of the 23 interviewed trafficked women received higher education due to various reasons. Oksana had a great desire to study at the university but did not have money for this: “There was not enough money in the family even to buy food, thus she could only dream about entering a university” (Oksana, case #1). Others graduated from a technical school or college, which are equivalent to secondary education in Ukraine, because they had to work and earn money and could not rely on the family’s support. “Olexandra had been studying in the local University for several years. Later she got married and gave birth to her daughter”. Thus she interrupted her studies and did not obtain a higher education (Olexandra, case # 10). Nadya did not finish one of the Kiev Universities because of the tragic death of her father:

“Three years ago I moved to Kiev from Donetsk and entered one of the universities...I did not get a stipend and finished two years of studies with my parents’ financial support...However my father unexpectedly got into a car accident and died...My mother was left with two younger sisters and I came back to Kiev to find a well paid job and planned to continue my education by correspondence” (Nadya, case # 12).

Therefore, 22 of the interviewed women came from small towns and villages and none of them has a higher education. The above analysis has shown that there is a tendency that these factors play a significant role in women’s decision to leave Ukraine with the help of traffickers. These factors indicate that, 22 interviewed women have lack of reliable information about legal ways of migration, as anti-trafficking campaigns are not conducted in small towns and villages.

In addition, *what role does the specific post-1991 Ukrainian culture play in shaping women’s decision?* What reasons have made Tanya (case #8) for example take up a job in the United Arab Emirates?

“Tanya lived in a small town in the Luhansk region. She was 20 years old. Her father left the family when she was 4 and her brother was 2 years old. In 1991

her brother was knocked down by a car. He stayed alive but became disabled. So the mother couldn't work because she had to take care of him. The girl finished technical school but couldn't find work... A friend of her mother proposed to her to go to her relatives in the UAE: to work as a servant at a rich villa. The salary was \$ 4000. It was incredible luck for the girl." (Tanya, case #8).

The Ukrainian culture, as a symbolic system, combines the positive legacy of the state socialism with the notion of equality of men and women, equal access to education, and equal access to job markets and equal salaries both genders with the negative consequences of the collapse of socialism. The analysis of the age of 23 interviewed women has shown that they all spend their childhood under socialism; they observed the equality that their mothers and grandmothers had. The collapse of this system, according to Morokvasic, made women adapt to the transitional period and take jobs abroad as part of the caring role for the family (Morokvasic, 2004, 13). In Tanya's case, she took up a bread-winner role in the family, as the collapse of socialism did not allow her to enter the Ukrainian job market equally with men. The proposed salary of \$4000 was really "an incredible luck" for her, as by earning this money Tanya could perform the caring role for her mother and her disabled brother, who fully depended on her.

When reading the 19 case files, the emotional underpinnings of women's decision to leave Ukraine, their wishes and desires seem important. *Thus, which emotions, wishes and desires of the 23 trafficked women could be considered cultural factors?* The 23 interviewed trafficked women wishes and desires were living in "stable" countries or being in "a happy marriage"- Tamara "decided to take up a job in Italy" (Tamara, #2), Vita "decided to go to work abroad, thus she found a job on one of the Internet sites. The job seemed very attractive – animator in one of the five-star hotels in Egypt" (Vita, case #3). Svetlana's narration reveals her strong desire to marry a foreigner, who could be a good father to her four-year old daughter.

"On one of the parties Svitlana's acquaintances asked her why being young and attractive, she was still single. Svitlana answered that she was fed up with a marriage with a drunken man. Then someone said that she should marry a

foreigner, as their attitude to women and marriage was quite different. Svitlana was even proposed a person who would help her to go abroad...Svitlana couldn't understand until now, why she, with a bitter experience in marriage, believed in happy marriage with a foreigner? It might be because the Ukrainian television showed happy and well-off life abroad. Then why did she believe? Maybe because she thought she had the right to be happy. Svitlana was excited to live with a handsome and rich foreigner, who could support her and her daughter Olenochka" (Svetlana, case # 11).

*Still, can the strong desire to leave Ukraine be considered a cultural factor? Apart from economic reasons, what other motives lie behind this strong desire?* In one of the anonymous I-narration stories, let's call this woman X, she states that:

"I have managed to earn some money and went for holidays abroad. Having seen the life "abroad", I realized that our country is even more "wild" than I thought before. I have seen and "felt" the new life and life in Ukraine seemed a nightmare. During several months I was actively looking for the ways to leave Ukraine. The moment had come when I did not care to which country I would go (western or eastern), I did not care about the nature of the job, the most important thing was that this must not be Ukraine" (X, case # 14).

Lalotou's concept of "personal dissidence" (Lalotou, 2007) could be applied to X's case, as this woman felt a strong dissatisfaction with the life in Ukraine in comparison to the life "abroad" she had seen during her holidays. She calls Ukraine "wild", and perhaps some reasons and problems X had in Ukraine lie behind this notion of "wild".

While Oksana "was always attracted by traveling, new countries and new people. She wanted to change her life, and shortage of money in her family and constant quarrels only reinforced that desire" (Oksana, case #1). That is another side of "personal dissidence", as Oksana's wish to travel, to see the world, to try luck in another country and by doing this to change her life partly because of problems in family life.

To conclude this sub-chapter, I think I can assume from the analysis of the available 19 case files that cultural factors do play a role in women's decision to leave Ukraine. Economic factor alone is not a sufficient explanation. The cultural factors include the state socialist legacy

of equality of men and women and equal possibilities, but negative consequences of collapse of that system and need for women to adapt to the post-1991 transitional period. Then the post-1991 transitional period, import of Hollywood movies (such as *Pretty Woman*) and soap operas that romanticize life in the West. Moreover, on the emotional and psychological level these are disappointment in marriage, experiences with domestic violence, and responsibility for dependant children and brothers/sisters, sick parents. Women's wishes and desires include "personal dissidence", desire to find love and happiness, or just live "a glamour western life".

### 3.2 Trafficking experience: expectations, reality and justification of consent

In this subchapter I will focus on the issue of consent and I will try to answer the question: *Do women give their consent to be trafficked? If yes, then what are its consequences?* All 23 interviewed women willingly accepted the jobs proposed to them. "When the acquaintance of her friend proposed her to go to Germany to work as a waitress, she agreed with joy" (Olga, case #6). "She agreed to the proposition of a distant relative to go to Germany" (Olexandra, case #10). "Natalka was proposed by her acquaintance to go to work in Switzerland with the help of a firm. Natalka proposed this job to her friend Oksana...According to the contract the firm had to assist in making documents and in buying tickets". (Natalka, Oksana, case #5). Sometimes the traffickers made the women sign a contract in a foreign language, as in Svitlana', Galya' and Larisa' case (women were made to sign a contract on the border and were promised a prosperous future), or the women signed a work contract that turned out to be false (Tamara, case #2). According to the typology of David Archard, all 23 trafficked women from the 19 case files gave their express<sup>4</sup> consent to be trafficked either orally or in written form.

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<sup>4</sup> "Express" consent means when it is explicitly and publicly stated, when there is a sign of agreement. In the basic sense, as Archard claims the express consent is given by saying "I consent to ..." or by signing one's name under a

However, none of the 23 interviewed women consented to prostitute themselves or to be kept in other slavery like conditions. *What was the nature of the jobs to which women gave their consent?* According to the 23 women's narrations, the nature of the jobs proposed by the traffickers to the women was usually skilled or semi-skilled and "traditional" feminine: Tanya "was proposed to work as a servant at a rich villa" (Tanya, case #8), Larisa, Svitlana, Galya "were proposed a well-paid job in a dancing show-ballet" (Larisa, Svitlana, Galya, case #13), "Svitlana was very happy when her acquaintance Volodya, whom she knew for 2 years, proposed her to take a friend and go to Belgium to work as housekeeper" (Svitlana, Oksana, case #16), Marina "was proposed to work as a shop assistant in a super market in Istambul" (Marina, case #19)

*What were the consequences of that consent?* As discussed above, a useful way of structuring the consequences of the consent the 23 trafficked women faced is made by the Bulgarian psychotherapist Maria Tchomarova. The first type of consequences the trafficked women faced in the destination countries, according to Tchomarova, are severe violence, such beatings, hunger, and death threats. *Are there any examples of that first type of consequences in the 19 cases?* "When she arrived to Poland, Oksana was forced into prostitution regardless of her vehement protests. Oksana narrates about her life in Poland with fear, it seems that this period was the most frightful in her life" (Oksana, case # 1). Almost all 23 interviewed women mentioned beatings, Larisa told she was beaten into the belly and "Svitlana fainted after beatings and was paralyzed for a period of time" (Larisa, Svitlana, case # 13). Yuliya was forced into Internet pornography and one of her clients "tied her hands to a lamp, beat and raped her" (Yuliya, case # 18), after that the photos were posted at a site for sadomasochists.

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written statement of the form "I consent to..." or by responding to an inquiry of whether one does consent with the words such as "I do" (Archard, 1998, 8).

These terrifying examples show that the criminals treated the women inhumanly, they were bought and later sold, they brought profit, but the traffickers could easily get rid of those women, as the death of an undocumented immigrant or a prostitute would be unnoticed. An inhuman and brutal story was told by Larisa and Svitlana, when they were forced to cross the Greek border on foot, “they asked to be allowed to go for a toilet and was told that escape was impossible. Soon the women became convinced that escape was really impossible, as they found a body of a dead woman...” (Larisa, Svitlana, case # 13).

Second type of consequences of the actual trafficking experience according to Tchomarova’s typology is complete physical exhaustion. *Are there any examples of physical exhaustion in 19 cases?* Svitlana was told by the pimp that she had to entertain one client every hour (Svitlana, case # 11), others such as Marina, Nadya had to do several jobs simultaneously. “We were washing up dishes, cleaning the floor, wiping windows. In the evening we had to entertain clients at the bar and then in the bed” (Nadya, case # 12). In several cases women were proposed drugs for the purpose of “relaxation”. “If there were psychological problems with clients, Svitlana was cordially proposed a help with drugs” (Svitlana, case # 11). I assume criminals and pimps used these methods to exhaust the women psychologically, not to give them time to recover.

The third consequence of trafficking in Tchomarova’s typology is isolation, which means physical control. *What kind of control did 23 trafficked women experience?* Almost all of them were locked up in an apartment, a bar or a brothel, without a possibility to communicate with anybody. “Tamara was locked in a night bar together with other women and they were not allowed to leave it” (Tamara, case #2). “The owner was a middle-aged man. He told me some words in bad Russian and pushed me in a room and locked there.” (Marina, case #7). In all 19 case files the women’s documents were taken away, thus they became undocumented

immigrants. None of the women from the 19 case files spoke any foreign language or understood the language of the destination country, which reduced their chances to escape.

Further, the 23 interviewed women were threatened by the criminals with death threats and that they would find the women's relatives and children. Olga in the condition of severe violence was afraid not for herself but for the life of her children, whom she left with her friend, as the pimps "threatened her they would get to her children" (Olga, case #6). In I-narration story Nadja claimed that she was threatened to be killed in case she would not return the money she was paid and that nobody would find out it. "I was locked in a room without food for several days. I was beaten and was told that my family would be killed, as they knew everything about it" (Nadja, case # 12). Furthermore, Nadja was afraid that the pimps would tell her family what kind of work she was doing, as she did not want to disappoint her younger sisters for whom Nadja was an authority. Iryna's story is a bit different, as she made the mistake of taking her two sons with her to Italy. When she refused to do what was asked and refused to be separated from children, "the owner [of the house she had to clean] began to beat her elder son ... he made Iryna look how he put out a cigarette on the body of her son" (Iryna, case # 4).

Thus, the traffickers and criminals exercised all but complete moral and physical control over all 23 interviewed women. The women were in conditions of constant stress, traumas, being locked up and cut out from family and the rest of the world, while the inhuman treatment by the pimps and the clients influenced greatly the women's self-esteem and self-perception. For the trafficked women from 19 cases, in the condition of total moral and physical control and exhaustion, constant danger for their life and display of extreme violence, the threats about the life of family members looked very plausible. Sometimes the women were more afraid for the life of their family and not for themselves. The above analyzed consequences of trafficking that

women faced in the destination countries sharply contrasted to the dreams and aspirations they had when they had gave their consent to the trafficker.

However, some women managed to return to Ukraine with the help of NGOs or with the help of Ukrainian consulates in the foreign countries. The next question is: *What was the women's state when they return to Ukraine and what is the attitude to them?* When the trafficked women managed to escape and returned to Ukraine, they had to cope with two things: with the post traumatic state disorder (Der Kolk, Der Hart, 1995, 164) and with blame and pressure from their family, communities that usually have accepted the dominant discourse on trafficking. Which means that the 23 trafficked women tried to justify retrospectively their consent and exonerate themselves from that blame.

My first question here will be: *What kind of traumas did the women faced upon their arrival to Ukraine?* All 23 interviewed women have been traumatized and sometimes faced difficulties to narrate what happened to them and tried to conceal events that were too traumatic. “Oksana describes her life in Poland with fear; by her reserved narration one could understand that this period was the most terrible in her life” (Oksana, case #1). In the case of Vita, the social workers of La Strada faced difficulties while helping her, because she was not psychologically stable and was drug-addicted (Vita, case #3). In Irina's case, when she managed to come back from Italy with her children: “both mother and children lost weight, there were small scars on their skin. The children were very sick, Irina spent all the money that she earned on their treatment” (Irina, case # 4)

*What blame and pressure do the women face from their families and communities?* The families and communities are not always ready to accept back their daughters, sisters or wives, as the general attitude to trafficking is rather negative. “The girl [Raisa] is longing to come back home but afraid that everybody will gossip about her and that no one will marry her” (Raisa, case

#8). Marina, when she returned, did not have anyone to support her psychologically or financially.

“Now my grandmother died. I can’t live in my village any longer, because the pimps are looking for me. They are very angry that I managed to escape. They told my neighbors that I worked as a prostitute in Germany. I don’t have any place for believe” (Marina, case #7).

Moreover, the pattern that has been created by the media and politicians explains trafficking as an involuntary act, sees the main cause for this problem in poverty and waits for women to recognize their mistake. Therefore, the 23 trafficked women whose interviews I am analyzing framed their narrations according to the pattern of the dominant discourse. Accordingly, the women emphasized the difficult economic situation, while not fully trying to convey the real psychological and emotional factors or just briefly mentioning them. The dominant discourse readily accepts women’s narrations in which they do regret to leave Ukraine and in the best variant women have to witness against traffickers.

*Thus, what are the self-justifying arguments the 23 interviewed women use? Why?* “I am the only one to be blamed for everything that had happened” (Ganna , case # 17). I think Ganna is taking all the blame on herself because she thinks (or is made to think by the powerful discourse on trafficking) that the consequences she faced (Ganna was sold many times, forced into prostitution, lost 20 kilos) are her fault because she decided to leave Ukraine. In a post-traumatic state Ganna could not contemplate on the whole situation logically, moreover, she had to tell the potential audience what the latter wants to hear. And the potential audience wants to hear the woman’s confession to accept her back. As the dominant discourse on trafficking usually equates express consent of women to be trafficked with indirect<sup>5</sup> consent to prostitute

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<sup>5</sup> *indirect* consent, whereby “consent is given to that which is connected to that which is directly consented to” (Archard, 1998, 10). In Arcard’s explanation this means that if a person expressly consents to something, lets call it

themselves. Thus, Ganna and other trafficked women have to overcome that stigma of the discourse.

“Upon their arrival to Ukraine, women decided to witness against traffickers...Oksana is happy she managed to return to Ukraine, though she hasn’t yet decided what she will in future. She wants to give birth to a child and wants her child to a Ukrainian citizen” (Natalka, Oksana, case #5)

It is a very courage decision to witness against criminals, especially in Ukraine, as the program of protection of witnesses does not work effectively (Levchenko, Udalova, Trubavina, 2005, 16). However, Oksana emphasized that she wants her child to be born in Ukraine and to be a Ukrainian citizen, by which she wants to show the audience that would read her “confession” that she regrets having consented to be trafficked. For Oksana that is the only way to reintegrate socially and exonerate herself from blame of the dominant discourse of not being a “patriot”.

The same sort of self-justification is found in the anonymous first person narration of the woman whom we have agreed to call X:

“I’d like to tell everyone that I love Ukraine, because it is my country, I was born here and here my ancestors were born and died, my children will live here ... the success depends on us, do not try to find easy ways, love Ukrainian culture, traditions, customs...” (X, case # 14).

X is even using the imperative to make the society believe she loves Ukraine and she is a real patriot of her country. This is the message that the nationalistic political circles are ready to accept and believe. I would not deny the fact that the trafficked experience and the real Hell in the United Arab Emirates she had managed to escape from made X rethink the situation and her place in Ukraine. However, the question is why she is trying to convince everybody that life is better in Ukraine and not even try to leave this country? Because that kind of narration will give

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X, and that X is connected to another thing let’s say Y, then he/she indirectly consents to Y and to all consequences that it may bring.

her and other trafficked women the possibility to be accepted back into their families and not to be stigmatized by the media.

The most readily accepted narrations of the women are their self-justification arguments and attempts to convince the potential audience of journalists, politicians and themselves that they made a mistake by deciding to leave Ukraine (while their consent to be trafficked is not recognized), but still they remain patriots and will never do it again. I do not know whether the women really feel this patriotism or not, they might most probably have changed their attitude towards and perception of Ukraine, but they obviously have to follow this pattern of revived “patriotism” and frame their narrations accordingly.

## **Conclusion**

I have analyzed 23 interviews conducted by La Strada with 23 trafficked women right upon their arrival to Ukraine. I have used content analysis to study their cases and have analyzed to what extent the narration of the women followed the generally accepted pattern of the dominant public discourse on trafficking in Ukrainian. This pattern fails to regard the possibility of women giving consent to be trafficked, equates express consent to be trafficked with indirect consent to perform services of a sexual nature, sees the cause of the problem of the increase in trafficking in poverty and wants to hear patriotic narrations of those who returned. This dominant discourse does not address the problem of trafficking from cultural perspective, in other words it does not see how cultural forces shape women’s decision to leave Ukraine and let themselves be trafficked.

I have concluded from the analysis of the 23 women’s narrations that although women emphasized the difficult economic situation in their families, there were many important cultural forces that contributed to their decision to let themselves be trafficked. I have shown that these

cultural factors include the legacy of state socialism and the collapse of that system, the transitional post-1991 period and the import of Hollywood movies, and soap operas that romanticize western life and due to this romantization, women's desire to live that life, to find happiness in marrying a foreigner; the "caring" and "bread-winner" roles that women took up in the transitional period. Moreover, other factors that contribute to women's decision are their level of education and place of birth, disappointment in marriage, experience of domestic violence; "personal dissidence"- as dissatisfaction with present life, desire to change it by traveling abroad.

From the 19 case files that I have analyzed, I have concluded that all 23 women gave their express consent to traffickers, but the events that followed were a sharp contrast to their dreams and expectations. The actual events the 23 interviewed women faced were beatings, humiliations, sexual abuse, and physical and moral exhaustion. Upon arrival back to Ukraine some of the trafficked women exonerated themselves from blame in their narrations by using self justifying arguments. The trafficked women tried to convince the potential audience of journalists, politicians, ordinary citizens that they made a mistake by leaving Ukraine (while their consent to be trafficked is not recognized), but still they remain patriots and will never do it again. In such a way 23 women want to reintegrate back to their families, communities and to wash away the stigma, created by the public discourse on trafficking.

## CONCLUSION

My MA research was aimed at identifying and questioning several key characteristics of the dominant public discourse on trafficking in Ukraine. My MA Thesis has dealt with two issues of the dominant public discourse in Ukraine, namely the only-economic explanation of trafficking and consensual/non-consensual binary approach to this phenomenon.

I have concluded that one of the main pitfall is the failure of the dominant Ukrainian discourse to recognize trafficking as a complex, multi-sided issue and the importance of studying its cultural dimension. Moreover, I have problematized the binary approach taken in the public discourse of “voluntary” migration vs. “involuntary” trafficking and I have proven that women can give their consent to be trafficked.

First, in Chapter I, I have analyzed how trafficking is conceptualized through historic, neoliberal and legal frameworks internationally and in the specific Ukrainian context. Then I have studied how the Ukrainian public discourse is formed and what are its approaches to explanation of the increase in trafficking. While scholars on the international scale, like Jyoti Sanghera, have made attempts to challenge the dominant assumption that poverty is the only cause for the increase in trafficking (Sanghera, 2005, 5), the Ukrainian public discourse fails to recognize this fact. Further, Ukrainian public discourse does not regard trafficking as a voluntary act and in case women consent to be trafficked, they “got what they deserved”.

I have made an attempt to challenge this Ukrainian discourse by arguing that economic-only explanation of trafficking is oversimplified and a cultural dimension should be taken into account. Moreover, I have shown that while women do give their consent to be trafficked, the problem is that the discourse on trafficking does not distinguish express consent that women give to the traffickers by signing a contract or in other form with indirect consent to prostitute

themselves (though not all trafficking is of sexual nature). That is to say that, even if the women consent to the traffickers, they did not consent to the exploitative conditions, beatings, humiliations to which they are exposed in the destination countries.

In Chapter II, I have studied the cultural forces that shape women's decision to let themselves be trafficked, and the emotional and psychological underpinnings of that decision. One of the main reasons is the legacy of the Soviet Union, when people received ambiguous and twisted information about the western countries, then the fall of the Iron Curtain has brought a flood of information, as well as the notion of "western glamour" and other romanticized myths about the utopian life in the West. In Chapter II, I have also studied the typology of consent proposed by Archard. Then I have analyzed what expectations lie behind women's consent and what consequences the trafficked women faced in the destination countries. I have concluded from the studied literature that women come back to Ukraine in the state of post traumatic state disorder, but upon their arrival one more stress awaits – blame and pressure from media, politicians, and difficulties with reintegration into their families and communities that have accepted the negative patterns of the public discourse on trafficking.

In Chapter III, I have analyzed 19 cases in which 23 trafficked women have been interviewed by social workers and psychotherapists of La Strada. I have focused on and tried to analyze the cultural dimension of trafficking and cultural factors that shaped women's decision to leave Ukraine. I have also analyzed how the 23 trafficked women retrospectively try to justify their consent, as they feel it could be the only way to reintegrate socially and be accepted back. In their narrations women address the target audience of nationalist political circles and media, which want to hear that women regret having made the decision to leave Ukraine and that this decision was made because of extreme conditions of poverty. As I was not allowed to conduct interviews myself due to the principle of anonymity and because of a lack of relevant

psychological qualification, I think that for future research interviewing women right upon their arrival to Ukraine and for the reintegration period of time is crucial in order to make more specific conclusions about the cultural factors and the construction of consent.

Based on the analysis of the empirical data, I can answer the central questions posed in the beginning: the women decided to live Ukraine and let themselves be trafficked not only because of economic reasons, although the 23 interviewed women mentioned poverty as a main factor, but because of complex set of cultural factors as well. From the analysis of 19 case files I have concluded that cultural factors include the legacy of state socialism and collapse of that system, transitional post-1991 period and import of Hollywood movies, soap operas that romanticize western life, women's desire to live that life, to find happiness in marrying a foreigner; "caring" and "bread-winner" roles that women took up in the transitional post 1991-period. Moreover, other factors that contribute to women's decision are their level of education and place of birth, disappointment in marriage, experience of domestic violence; "personal dissidence"- as dissatisfaction with present life, desire to change it by traveling abroad.

Moreover, I can answer the second central question of my MA Thesis: women do give their consent to be trafficked. I have concluded that all 23 women gave their express consent to traffickers whether orally or in the written form by signing a contract. However, express consent should not be equated with indirect consent, and women did not consent to the consequences that followed, namely to beatings, humiliations, sexual abuse, physical and moral exhaustion in the destination countries.

The answer to the third central question of why women justify their consent lies in the narrow approach of the dominant public discourse on trafficking. Upon arrival to Ukraine some of the 23 trafficked women exonerated themselves from blame in their narrations by using self justifying arguments. The message of the trafficked woman X, presented in the introduction,

shows how this woman addresses her narration to the political and media circles in order not to be stigmatized in the public opinion for her desire to leave Ukraine. While Oksana states that she wants her child to be born in Ukraine and to be a Ukrainian citizen in order to show her patriotism to the nationalistic politicians.

My current suggestion in helping the trafficked women would be in changing their “trafficked image” in the dominant discourse through work with journalists and hopefully politicians. I think that the cultural dimension of trafficking and cultural forces that shape women’s consent to be trafficked should be studied further. Further research should be made, which should aim at interviewing the trafficked women right upon their return to Ukraine and then during the reintegration period. Case studies of that kind are time-consuming and need special permission of the trafficked women and could be conducted only with the joined efforts of the researcher, the NGO and the trafficked women.

The next step would be awareness raising about trafficking among the Ukrainians and the potential “risk” groups. Of course, that element is not new, as La Strada, for example, elaborates anti-trafficking campaigns and other information raising activities among the Ukrainian citizens. However, I see a problem in the very narrow perception of the process of trafficking and the need to broaden this discourse. The focus should be made on the cultural dimension of trafficking and people who create the dominant discourse (media and politicians) have to be shown the importance of looking from the cultural perspective of the trafficked women.

For the purpose of broadening the dominant discourse and introducing the important cultural element, I would propose the practical model of “Improving media coverage through Journalist training” elaborated by Bronwyn Jones (Jones, 2005, 137). Of course only the skeleton and the main idea of that model could be used in the Ukrainian context, but Jones states that the media coverage of trafficking in most cases is “one-dimensional and biased” (Jones, 2005, 137),

thus special training programs for journalists under careful supervision should be elaborated. I suggest that these training programs should be conducted by gender experts together with anti-trafficking activists in order to change the image of the trafficked woman in the Ukrainian society.

With further research on the cultural dimension of trafficking, international and joined efforts in broadening the dominant Ukrainian discourse would be the most beneficial. It should be admitted that the trafficked women could give their consent, but that should not be held against them, which they have to justify in order to be “reintegrated”.

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## APPENDICES

### Case files

#### Case #1

PSEYDONYM	OKSANA
Year of the interview	2004
Place of birth	Tcherkasskaya oblast
Family background	Quarrels in family, not enough money for food
Education	Could not enter University because of lack of money
Emotional coloring of consent	Attracted by new countries, traveling, new people
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Forced into prostitution in Poland, “the worst period in her life”, 10 months spent there
Retrospective self-justifications	Wants to work in Ukraine and earn money for traveling, though understands it would be almost impossible due to the level of salaries

#### Case #2

PSEYDONYM	TAMARA
Year of the interview	2006
Place of birth	Small town, south of Ukraine
Family background	Migrated to Rumania after marriage, husband turned to be a gambler: divorce, left with a son
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Desperately wanted to come back to Ukraine, to create a cozy home for herself and for her son
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Threaten to have no other way out due to illegal status in Italy, forced into prostitution
Retrospective self-justifications	Plans for future: want to come back to Ukraine as the life in foreign countries has brought only pain and sufferings

#### Case #3

PSEYDONYM	VITA
Year of the interview	2006
Place of birth	Small town, central part of Ukraine
Family background	The eldest child in the family
Education	Secondary school
Emotional coloring of consent	
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Signed a legal contract, forced into prostitution in the 5-star hotel in Egypt, was given drugs
Retrospective self-justifications	Traumatized and not psychologically adequate

#### Case #4

PSEYDONYM	IRYNA
Year of the interview	2005
Place of birth	Small town in Prykarpattya (Western Ukraine)
Family background	Got married in 17, gave birth to 2 children, divorced after 6 years of married life. Has 2 brothers and 3 sisters
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Had to support her own children and help brothers and sisters
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Went to Italy to work as a housewife, was convinced to take children with her. Forced to domestic labor, children were sent to beg on the streets, children were beaten; cigarettes were put off on the skin.
Retrospective self-justifications	Think with scare about going to work abroad, want to find proper job in Ukraine to provide her family for

#### Case #5

	NATALKA, OKSANA
Year of the interview	
Place of birth	Donetska oblast, live in Donetsk
Family background	Natalka had to work to provide for her sick mother and brother; Oksana moved to Donetsk after the death of her mother, parents were divorced, father died as well. Oksana lived with her boy friend
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Oksana and her boyfriend wanted to have a child, wanted to earn money to have a “normal” family
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Went to Switzerland, instead of consummation women were forced into prostitution
Retrospective self-justifications	Natalka went to Kiev to undergo treatment, Oksana want to give birth to a baby in Ukraine and want her child to be a Ukrainian citizen

#### Case #6

PSEYDONYM	OLGA
Year of the interview	2004
Place of birth	
Family background	At 25 divorced her husband, who drank a lot and made a row, had 2 children
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Wanted to find a good father for her children, a good partner for herself, “advised” by a friend to find among Germans
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Forced into prostitution in Germany, threatened by criminals to find and revenge on her children, got pregnant, forced to make an abortion, spent 8 months in Germany
Retrospective self-justifications	Was extremely happy to return to her children, who were safe and sound

### Case #7

PSEYDONYM	MARINA
Year of the interview	
Place of birth	Poltava region
Family background	Had never known her father, mother died at the age of 3, brought up by a grandmother
Education	Incomplete secondary education
Emotional coloring of consent	Wanted to help her granny, did not want to work at the collective farm
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Trafficked to Germany, was met by a Polish woman. Marina was told she have to work as a prostitute and asked her age. When the women herd Marina was only 16, she help the girl to escape.
Retrospective self-justifications	Stressful returning to Ukraine, pursued by traffickers, who told the neighbors that Marina worked as a prostitute. She does not have a place to live, afraid to come back to her granny’s, doesn’t know what to do

### Case # 8

PSEYDONYM	TANYA
Year of the interview	
Place of birth	Small town, Luhansk region
Family background	Father left family when she was 4, her brother was 2. brother was knocked down by the car, stayed disabled.
Education	Technical school
Emotional coloring of consent	Family had nothing to eat but bread and water, could not find a job in her native town
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Attracted clients in the United Arab Emirats, arrested by police, condemned for 3 years for false charge, has been in prison for 11 months.
Retrospective self-justifications	Afraid that everybody would chatter about her and “no one will marry her”

### Case #9

PSEYDONYM	RAISA
Year of the interview	
Place of birth	Kiev
Family background	Lived with her mother, rented their apartment to a student from Jordan. Raisa fell in love with Azim and gave birth to a child, went to Jordan and lived with Azim parents
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Wanted to have a family and considered Azim a good father and husband
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Kept in awful conditions, was not allowed to leave the house. Azim did not marry her, took the child and sold Raisa to another man
Retrospective self-	Escaped, but her son was kept in Jordan. Did not know how to get him

justifications	back, very anxious
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### Case #10

PSEYDONYM	OLEXANDRA
Year of the interview	
Place of birth	Chernigiv, North Ukraine
Family background	Got married, gave birth to a child, divorced when the child was 2 years old
Education	Quite studies at the local university because of the pregnancy
Emotional coloring of consent	
Narrated "trafficked" experience	Forced into prostitution in Germany, raped and beaten, kept without food for a long time
Retrospective self-justifications	Deported to Ukraine, infected, undergone several surgeries, agreed to witness in the court against pimps and traffickers

### Case#11

PSEYDONYM	OLENA
Year of the interview	
Place of birth	Kiev
Family background	Divorced a drunken husband, four year old daughter, moved to her mother's place
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Asked why she, a beautiful and attractive woman, was still single and was advised to marry a foreigner, whose attitude to marriage is quite different. Desperately wanted to be married and happy
Narrated "trafficked" experience	Forced into prostitution in Germany, was afraid to be given drugs
Retrospective self-justifications	Happy to come back to Ukraine, the La Strada network Berlin-Kiev helped greatly

### Case#12

PSEYDONYM	NADYA
Year of the interview	
Place of birth	Donetsk
Family background	Younger sisters-twins, father died in a car accident, had to help mother and sisters
Education	Not finished higher education
Emotional coloring of consent	Had to be a leading authority for younger sisters, had to support them morally and materially
Narrated "trafficked" experience	Dept-bondage, death threats, beatings, left without food for several days, threaten to pursue her family. Forced domestic labor and forced prostitution.

Retrospective self-justifications	Was afraid that her sisters would find out about the nature of her job, want to punish those who deceived her. “Nobody needs me as I am now. Who could help me?”
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### Case#13

PSEYDONYM	LARISA, SVITLANA, GALYA
Year of the interview	1998
Place of birth	Rivne
Family background	Larisa had only a mother,
Education	Dancing school (presumably secondary education)
Emotional coloring of consent	Were convinced in a well-paid opportunity of dancing performance, very engaged in preparing concert, making costumes
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Transported from Romania to Greece, forced to dance striptease and to serve clients, beaten. Svitlana fainted after severe violence and was paralyzed for a while
Retrospective self-justifications	Ready to testify in the court

### Case#14

PSEYDONYM	ANONIMOUS I-NARRATION (X)
Year of the interview	
Place of birth	Provincial town, moved to Kiev
Family background	Single-parent family, only mother
Education	Secondary education
Emotional coloring of consent	Considered Ukraine to be a “wild” country, wanted desperately to leave it, wanted to find a “fairy-tale” and “adventures”
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Psychologically and morally humiliated, most probably not forced into prostitution, worked as a waitress in the United Arab Emirates
Retrospective self-justifications	“I want to tell everybody that I love Ukraine, I love it as it is, as it is my country, my ancestors lived and died here, my children will live here”. “Do love Ukrainian culture, traditions, customs...love our country”

### Case#15

PSEYDONYM	ILONA
Year of the interview	2003
Place of birth	Ukraine
Family background	
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Wanted to dance in a show-ballet in the United Arab Emirates, told at the beginning not to start affairs. Convinced she would only perform fully dressed, as it was a Muslim and puritan country
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Locked in a room with 7 other women, three women slept on one bed, cold water and cold nights. Not given proper food, regularly checked by

	police!
Retrospective self-justifications	Went to the police station in Ukraine, made a statement, waiting for the results of criminal investigation

#### Case#16

PSEYDONYM	SVITLANA AND OKSANA
Year of the interview	2003
Place of birth	Ukraine
Family background	Oksana divorced her husband, was left with a small child. Svitlana had a sick mother
Education	Svitlana - culinary technical school, Oksana - secondary education
Emotional coloring of consent	The only support for mother and child, had to devise ways to earn money
Narrated "trafficked" experience	Proposed the work of housekeeping in Belgium, forced to work in the windows, to work out money that were spent on them, constant beatings
Retrospective self-justifications	Witnessed against traffickers, the criminal investigation is in progress

#### Case#17

PSEYDONYM	GANNA
Year of the interview	2003
Place of birth	Ukraine
Family background	Mother, father and eight-old daughter (no indication on husband or partner)
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Rationally planned future job, new the data on the future employer, telephone, address.
Narrated "trafficked" experience	First worked as a waitress in Yugoslavia, then "proposed" a work of a prostitute, had no other way out. A long list of sales from one pimp to another. In Italy she was arrested, gave false testimony because of fear.
Retrospective self-justifications	"I am the only one to be blamed in everything that had happened"

#### Case#18

PSEYDONYM	YULIA
Year of the interview	1996
Place of birth	Ukraine
Family background	Divorced at the age of 19, was left with a child
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	
Narrated "trafficked" experience	Forced into pornography, threaten that tell her parents and mother-in-law about the nature of the job. Undergone severe violence

Retrospective self-justifications	
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#### Case#19

PSEYDONYM	MARINA
Year of the interview	2000
Place of birth	Ukraine
Family background	
Education	
Emotional coloring of consent	Want to work abroad, to search for changes
Narrated “trafficked” experience	Worked in a night club in Istanbul double shift: a waitress and a prostitute, escaped, found a job of a waitress, after 5 month earned enough money to come back home
Retrospective self-justifications	Gave evidence